Children Who Go Missing from Home or Care, or Who are Vulnerable to Sexual Exploitation

This is the multi-agency procedure for children missing from care or home. If you consider that a child/young person is at immediate risk, the police should be contacted on 999.

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1 | Overview

The Operations Directors, Safeguarding and Specialist Services, the Deputy Director for Children Services, Education, and the Chief Superintendent Hertfordshire Constabulary are responsible for the policy and the procedures relating to the arrangements for monitoring missing children/young people.

The Heads of Service, Children Looked After and Services for Young People Manager (Vulnerable Young People Policy Lead), are responsible for the annual reporting of information about children missing from home or care and patterns of absence amongst looked after children/young people to the HSCB.

Every child /young person with a missing episode should attract proper attention from the professionals involved, who must collaborate to ensure a consistent and coherent response is given to the child/young person on his/her return. Professional discussion between teams in Children’s Services and other relevant agencies may be required to ensure a sensible and timely provision of service.

The HSCB recognises that the full implementation of this guidance, with consistent responses that result in effective action for those who repeatedly go missing or runaway are critical to keeping children/young people safe. The link between child sexual exploitation and child trafficking is recognised and the HSCB procedures should be applied as appropriate.

For each missing episode sexual exploitation may need to be considered. See 6.6 Safeguarding Children Abused through Sexual Exploitation, or relate to 6.5 Safeguarding Children from Abroad (including children who are victims of trafficking and unaccompanied asylum seeking children)

Information will be shared between partner agencies to inform decisions and thus safeguard individual children and young people and to enable service improvement and developments.

If Children’s Services places a child looked after with private providers in residential care, foster care or semi-independent accommodation, the provider must agree, within contractual arrangements to abide by the Local Safeguarding Children Board’s Missing Children Procedure, with specified arrangements.
1.1 Definitions

For the purposes of this document:

A child or young person is: someone under the age of 18. Care leavers includes young people aged from 16-24. For care leavers over the age of 18, they are considered an adult. They may be treated as a vulnerable adult should they go missing.

A missing child and young person is: A child or young person under the age of 18 who has run away from home or placement, or feels forced or lured to leave, or whose whereabouts is unknown.

Missing: Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another; and

Absent: A person is not at a place where they are expected or required to be.

Any missing episode is potentially serious, one runaway is one too many

Please see the Glossary Appendix 1 for explanation of complex terms used in this document

1.2 Prevention

Everyone has a responsibility to inform the police if a child/young person goes missing. This includes informing those who have parental responsibility for the child/young person (Children’s Services, parent or person with parental responsibility).

Prevention work and strategies relating to children/young people going missing is of paramount importance and requires an integrated multi agency approach. This includes:

- Awareness and training for all professionals
- Awareness and safety sessions for young people via curriculum opportunities
- Multi agency assessment procedures, including CAF, which should include the risk indicators for running away or other specialist services where concerns are identified.
• Consistent implementation of this protocol and procedures across all agencies
• Monitoring of compliance with the protocol and the monitoring of the reduction of missing episodes through quarterly performance reports
• Analysis of data and information from return interviews
• Support and advice to parents
• Use of existing legislation such as section 2 of the child/young person abduction act 1984
• Development of contingency plans within CIN Plans, CP Plans, LAC Plans and Pathway Plans for children and young people, including care leavers, who are vulnerable to exploitation, trafficking or going missing.

It is a requirement that active preventative measures are taken for each child looked after, through effective, regularly reviewed and up to date Placement/Risk Management Plans.

The most effective safeguards are positive relationships for the child/young person with trusted adults, joint action in partnership with families, good information sharing, joint assessments of need, joint planning and professional trust between agencies.

1.3 Findings from Research and Enquiries

Findings from research and learning from National Reviews and Enquiries are important in developing responses to missing children and young people.

The following documents and guidance are helpful background reading:

Approximately 77,000 under 16 year olds go missing overnight in England. Peak ages for going missing are between 13 and 16 years old and a quarter are under 11 years old (Children/Young People’s Society, Still Running 1999/ Social Exclusion Unit [SEU], 2002). The 2005 Still Running survey indicated that approximately 19 percent of those questioned defined themselves as having a disability.\(^1\) Research\(^2\) also indicates the rates of running away appeared higher in children and young people with a disability and those children and young people who did run away were often diagnosed with a conduct disorder, as running away is one of the factors presented when diagnosing conduct disorders.

\(^1\) The Children’s Society Still Running 3 survey 2011
\(^2\) The Prevalence of Disabilities and Maltreatment Among Runaway Children Sullivan and Knutson 2000
Children and Young People from all sectors and ethnicities are vulnerable to sexual exploitation. See 6.6 Safeguarding Children Abused through Sexual Exploitation and See Department for Education’s what to do if you suspect a child is being sexually exploited.

Criminal prosecutions relating to a gang of adult men involving girls in child sexual exploitation (CSE) in Rochdale led to the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Runaway and Missing Children/Young People Joint Inquiry and the Office of the Children/young people’s Commissioner Accelerated Report regarding Inquiry into CSE in Gangs and Groups, with a special focus on children/young people in care July 2012 at http://www.children/young peoplescommissioner.gov.uk/content/publications/content_580.

Early messages from these are:

- Children/young people in care are three times more likely to go missing than others. 46% of these were in children/young people’s homes, many miles from home.
- The needs of trafficked children/young people were often poorly understood. See 6.5 Safeguarding Children from Abroad (including children who are victims of trafficking and unaccompanied asylum seeking children)
- Many stay with friends or relatives, about 30% sleep rough. Few leave the local area, average age on first missing is 13 years but many are under 11 years, many have educational problems.

The Children Society identified that the following risk factors may precede a missing incident: arguments and conflicts, poor family relationships, physical and emotional abuse (including Domestic Violence), step parent issues and boundaries and control issues.

Additional risks associated with children and young people going missing are:

- No means of support or legitimate income leading to high risk activities
- Involvement in criminal activities
- Victim of crime including child/young person sexual exploitation (CSE) and violence
- Alcohol/substance misuse
- Deterioration of physical and mental health
- Disengagement from education, training or employment
- Increased vulnerability, linking with other vulnerable children/young people or gangs
- Trafficking
- Homelessness
16 and 17 year olds (Not Looked After)

Sixteen and 17 year olds are equally vulnerable and at risk as younger children. If a 16 or 17 year old goes missing they may present as homeless. In this case the local authority must assess their needs as any other child and if they are deemed a child in need and require accommodation under section 20 of the Children Act 1989, they will become looked after.

The accommodation must meet their assessed need and they may be placed in a provision catering to specific requirements (i.e. specialist support for child sexual exploitation or substance misuse).

16 and 17 year olds (Leaving Care)

Care Leavers may be vulnerable to sexual exploitation and may go missing from their home or accommodation. Local authorities must ensure that care leavers live in “suitable accommodation” as defined in Section 23B (10) of the Children Act 1989 and Regulation 9(2) of the Care Leavers Regulations. In particular young people should feel safe in their accommodation and the areas where it is located. Local authorities should ensure that Pathway Plans set out where a young person may be vulnerable to exploitation, trafficking or going missing, and put in place a robust risk management plan and support services.

A range of “Push” and “Pull” factors may be reasons for running:

- Push factors: problems at home, including difficult relationships, family breakdown and maltreatment or abuse; problems at school, including bullying; and personal problems including mental health issues.
- Pull factors: wanting to be near friends and family, peer pressure, or following grooming by adults seeking to exploit them

The more securely attached a child or young person is to his or her carer(s), the less likely they are to go missing from their home. These attachments form over a period of time where the child or young person feels wanted, valued and cared for. The message carers and other adults give when a young person returns to the home is therefore crucial in helping them build a sense of worth and belonging.

18 Year Olds and Over (Leaving Care)

When a care leaver (18 plus) goes missing, every attempt should be made to make contact (i.e. phone call, text, email, contact carer, family, etc.) to establish the well-being of the young person. Due to the age of the young person it may not always be possible for workers to be made aware soon after
a young person goes missing. And there may not be a police report, as the young person is an adult and would not necessarily come to the attention of the police (i.e. For example, when a child/young person is wandering alone at night). However, young adults may be just as vulnerable as younger children.
2 | Statutory Guidance

The Statutory Guidance on Children Who Run Away or Go Missing from Home or Care January 2014 describes the duties of partner agencies and informs this policy, guidance and procedures.

This guidance is to:

- Enable the effective implementation of these procedures in Section 3 of this chapter.
- Help professionals, parents and carers to assess whether a child/young person is absent without consent or missing
- Aid in the assessment of risk and vulnerability, and production of individual risk management plans that support and protect children and families
- Assist the investigation and tracing of the missing child/young person
- Describe who should carry out return to care or home interviews, and how they should be undertaken
- Highlight the importance of the use of data and information from the return to care or home interview to prevent further incidents, and plan safeguarding services.

2.1 Scope of Guidance and Monitoring Arrangements

This guidance cannot anticipate every situation. All agencies should use their professional knowledge and judgement to take any action that is deemed necessary to safeguard the child/young person, based on an assessment of risk for each child/young person.

The guidance relates to children/young people who go missing from:

- The parental home, or the home where the parents have arranged for the child/young person to stay or live
- Residential education
- Semi-independent accommodation, including hostels, rented accommodation
- Children/young people looked after (CLA) by another local authority living in Hertfordshire
• Children/young people looked after (CLA) by Hertfordshire county council (HCC) and placed:
• In HCC children's homes within Hertfordshire
• In HCC foster carers homes
• In adoption placements within Hertfordshire
• In private children’s homes or with private agency foster carers within and outside Hertfordshire

2.2 Principles

The following principles must be considered as part of our work with children and young people:

• A child or young person who repeatedly goes missing is more vulnerable.
• A Child or young person should be reported missing to the police when appropriate, not as a behaviour management tool.
• It is important not to dismiss the significance of multiple episodes of running away or going missing by a child or young person:
• Children/Young people may be enticed away from their placements or home by activities that they see as exciting or by predatory influences and subjected to child sexual exploitation (CSE).
• Some short or single absences may be as risky as lengthy ones.
• Those aged 16/17 who run away are no less vulnerable or at risk than younger children/young people.
• The individual circumstances for each child or young person should be kept under review and a judgement made about the level of risk to inform the decision as to whether to inform the police.

The following may also be indicators of children/young people who go missing or are absent:

• Female Genital Mutilation
• Bullying
• Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children /Young People
• Forced Marriages
2.3 Sharing Data: Police and Children’s Services, and Referral Management Arrangements

It is important to share relevant Information with all partner agencies about children/young people who go missing including those placed in another local authority.

All word documents that are sent by email across organisational or departmental boundaries must be sent in password protected mode, with the password being sent separately or by telephone or text.
3 | Procedures

These procedures should be read in conjunction with the Policy and Guidance sections of this chapter.

3.1 What to Do When a Child/Young Person is Absent Without Consent, or Whereabouts are Unknown.

Some children/young people stay out longer than agreed for various reasons such as: on purpose to test boundaries, running away after a dispute, failing to return on time, staying at a known location with a friend, he or she has missed the bus, showing his or her disagreement with aspects of their placement.

This is normally absent without consent and should be managed by the child/young person’s immediate carer (e.g. parent/carer, staff of the children/young people’s home or residential school or the foster carer), by (as relevant):-

- Searching the accommodation, outbuildings, vehicles and local area, and places where the child/young person is known to go, if it is safe to do so
- Asking (in person or by phone) friends and family where child/young person may be
- Ringing the child/young person’s mobile phone
- Asking other staff in a children/young people’s home, or other children/young people who live there
- Carrying out any actions already agreed in the CAF or risk management plan completed by the targeted youth support service or allocated social worker, care plan/risk assessment completed for a child looked after
- Making efforts to ensure the child/young person is found and returned to a safe place

If the whereabouts of the child/young person remain unknown or become a concern this should be reported to the police.
3.2 Children & Young People Placed in Hertfordshire by another Local Authority

The process for recording Missing Episodes for a child or young person placed in Hertfordshire by another Local Authority is for a Case Note to be added to LCS – A Missing Person Episode Task is not created.

Children & Young People who are Looked After and placed in Hertfordshire by another Local Authority should have a CLAe Alert recorded on their LCS Record – This is providing that Hertfordshire Children’s Services have been notified.

If you receive a Missing Episode Task for a child or young person and through enquiries with carers or the Missing Person’s Unit you establish that the child or young person has been placed in Hertfordshire by another Local Authority then the following steps must be taken

- Contact the relevant Local Authority and request they send an Out of County Notification to the Customer Service Centre
  protectedreferrals.cs@hertfordshire.gov.uk or
  protectedreferrals.cs@hertscc.gcsx.gov.uk in line with the following regulation:

**Arrangements for Placement of Children (General) Regulations 1991**

*In accordance with the above regulation, local authorities placing children or young persons within the area of another authority are required to provide written notification to the Local Social Services Department, Local Health Authority and Local Department of Education.*

**NB: Once received at the Customer Service Centre, this will be sent to Duty Brokerage Accommodation Team who will update the child or young person’s LCS record with a CLAe Alert**

- Request for ICT User Support to Roll-back/remove the Missing Person Episode
- Case Note the above actions on the child or young person’s LCS Record via the main Case Notes tab
3.3 Pathways for Children/Young People Who Go Missing

Please see Appendix 2 to view the Pathways for Children and Young People Who Go Missing,

- Children placed at a distance involved in criminal offending
- Children placed at a distance involved in child sexual exploitation
- Children placed at a distance who are repeatedly missing
- Children placed at a distance involved in criminal offending or CSE

Appendix 3 for LCS Guidance and Appendix 4 to view the Missing Children Referral Pathways

- Missing Person’s Notification
- New Contact to Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)
- New Contact to Thriving Families
- New Contact to Targeted Youth Support Team
- New Contact to Assessment Team
- Open Cases to Safeguarding and Specialist- Non-CLA
- Open Child Looked After Cases

Appendix 4 | LSC Missing Person Episode Task Guidance Notes

- LCS Missing Person Episode Task Guidance

3.4 Children Who Repeatedly Go Missing or Where There are Escalating Concerns.

The following circumstances are indicators of heightened risk:

- Groups of children/young people run away from their care placement together
- The child/young person’s behaviour is uncharacteristic
- Children/young people repeatedly go missing
- A single significant episode of going missing
- Children/young people are at risk of trafficking
- Children/young people who are involved in substance misuse
- Children/young people who may be being sexually exploited
- Children/young people committing offences
- Children/young people placing themselves at serious risk of harm
- Children/young people identified by the police as high risk
3.5 Multi-Agency Risk Management for Missing and/or Sexual Exploitation Meeting (MARMM/SEM)

Consideration should be given to holding a Multi-Agency Risk Management for Missing and/or Sexual Exploitation Meeting (the meeting may include parents/those with parental responsibility) if any of the above concerns are relevant.

- This meeting should be attended by:
  - Police
  - Children’s Services
  - Foster carer or staff from children/young people’s home
  - Any other relevant professional e.g. Attendance and Pupil Support Team
  - Child/young person (if appropriate)
  - Parent/person with parental responsibility
  - Host local authority, where child/young person is placed outside Hertfordshire
  - Appropriate health professional if required

It should identify and plan:

- If the child/young person is missing, finding the child/young person, and actions to be taken on his or her return which will be recorded in the child’s Care Plan or Placement Plan
- Whether the child/young person will return to the previous placement
- How the child/young person will be transported there
- How the police wish to conduct Safe and Well interviews with the child or young person before they are returned to their placement or identify if other planned arrangements are more suitable
- Who is the most appropriate ‘independent person’ to talk to the child or young person after their return unless they express a wish to speak to their social worker or IRO
- Whether a Strategy Meeting under S47 is appropriate
- Whether Children Services staff should complete or update a ‘Need to Know’
- Whether changes should be made to the Risk Assessment and or Plan
- Whether a referral to Sexual Exploitation and Runaway Children Panel (SEARCH) is required
- Consider the need for medical treatment or advice for the child/young person
- Consider an immediate Multi Agency Risk Management Plan
The potential significance of repeated missing episodes should not be dismissed. Often such children/young people are immediately labelled as a ‘problem’ and insufficient consideration is given to why they persistently absent themselves. Persistent missing episodes need to be explored, particularly as part of return interviews. It should be noted that children/young people who repeatedly go missing are more vulnerable.

3.6 The Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan for Children and Young People

The Risk Assessment will be undertaken when the likelihood of a child/young person going missing is identified or is missing and/or vulnerable to sexual exploitation. It enables staff/carers to be clear what the risks are for the particular child/young person and/or the risks s/he may pose to the public.

The risk assessment will be completed and reviewed:

- For each child and young person who goes missing
- Where new information means a change in the level of identified risk and need for a change of plan
- As directed by the manager or forum to which the matter is presented (e.g. TYS Risk Management Panel or Sexual Exploitation and Runaway Children Panel (SEARCH)), and included in the care plan where applicable.

It will be used as a guide, to help bring together information, identify the level of risk and develop a robust risk management plan. The risk assessment may be completed by practitioners in any agency.

3.7 Photographs / Media

A recent clear photograph of the child/young person should be available for the police. It is vital to the safe recovery of the child/young person as the police will use it to identify the child/young person and conduct enquiries. In very serious cases, where the child/young person is believed to be at severe risk, the police and HCC may decide to use the photograph with the media e.g. publishing the photograph to national or local media, and circulation on the Police – International Centre for Missing and Exploited children (ICMEC) www.missingkids.co.uk website. (Agreement for media coverage will need to be sought from Head of Service for CLA or from those with parental responsibility).
When a child goes missing consideration should always be given to gaining parental permission for any new media or publicity. When a missing child is the subject of ongoing care proceedings, permission of the court is also required before details of the child can be published.

When police approach Children’s Services in an emergency regarding the use of Facebook and Twitter, parental agreement should still be sought wherever possible and checks should still be made as to whether the young person is the subject of ongoing care proceedings. If parents cannot be contacted and there is no current court involvement then permission should be given by the Head of Service for the use of media. However, in these circumstances no reference should be given in respect of the young person being a child looked after.

In accordance with section 97 of the Children Act 1989 and section 12 of the Administration of Justice Act 1960, if a child is the subject of ongoing care proceedings under the Children Act 1989 they cannot be identified without permission of the court and an application would need to be made for permission to publish details in relation to the child.

### 3.8 Planning for the Finding and Return

Contingency planning for when the child/young person is located includes:

- If the child or young person is a Child Looked After, whether the child/young person will return to the previous placement or if not looked after to parental home (role of social worker).
- How the child/young person will be transported to their home or placement and the role of carer and police.
- The Police ‘safe and well’ interview with the child/young person before they are returned to their placement or at the family home. The police will do this for each child.
- Identify who is the most appropriate ‘independent person’ to talk to the child/young person after their return unless they express a wish to speak to their social worker or IRO.
- For children looked after this is usually an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and for others a member of the Targeted Youth Support Service (TYSS), Safeguarding and Specialist Services, and Thriving Families Service.

### 3.9 Roles and Responsibilities: When a Child Goes Missing or is Absent.
This applies to a child or young person, who is living at home, in arrangements made by parents in the community or is a Child Looked After.

All carers will act in the capacity of a 'good parent'.

Support and advice is available from the relevant Children’s Services team responsible for the child/young person, or the safeguarding out of hours service (SOOHS) for foster carers and the on call manager for all residential establishments.

Anyone who has care of a child/young person without parental responsibility may do what is reasonable to safeguard and promote the child/young person’s welfare (Children Act 1989 Section 3 (5)). So, it may be ‘reasonable’ to inform the police, or Children’s Services, and, if appropriate, the parents of the concerns for a child/young person’s safety and whereabouts.

Any agency (including voluntary organisations) or member of the public aware that a child or young person’s whereabouts are not known, and may be at risk, will advise the parent, or carer, to ensure that the matter is reported to the police, and if necessary follow this up by contacting the police to verify the reporting by the parent or carer has occurred.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Absent Without Consent or Missing</th>
<th>Parents/Carers/Practitioner/Placement Provider Actions</th>
<th>Parents/Carers/Practitioner/Placement Provider Notifies Police Child or Young Person is Missing?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absent without consent, but whereabouts known and child/young person is judged to be at no apparent risk</td>
<td>Encourage young person to return, and treat positively on return. Refer to any preventative plan re: allowing to stay or arrange to return</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absent without consent but whereabouts are uncertain or unknown</td>
<td>Make every effort to locate, look, ring, text, ask. Encourage young person to return, and treat positively on return. Keep under review, consider medication needs, time, weather, risk</td>
<td>Yes, if a child/young person cannot be contacted or remains out</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
or care plan and need to escalate overnight, whose behaviour is out of character or not in a risk assessed situation, presents risk to others, has significant health needs or has learning difficulties. For other children at carer’s discretion on assessing risk.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absent without consent and whereabouts known and he or she is judged to be at risk</td>
<td>Make every effort to locate, look, ring, text, ask. Encourage young person to return, and treat positively on return</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLUS Court conditions of residency, or court restrictions have been violated</td>
<td>Make every effort to locate, look, ring, text, ask encourage young person to return, and treat positively on return. Inform social work team, or allocated worker Youth Justice worker, or safeguarding out of hours service (SOOHS) immediately.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young person is a child looked after in semi-independent accommodation, is unexpectedly absent beyond check in time, no mobile contact &amp; key contacts not verified well being or there are particular concerns s/he is at risk</td>
<td>In office hours the provider should report the young person missing to the police and then inform the social work team. Outside office hours the provider reports the child/young person to the police and informs SOOHS. The provider will liaise with police and put in place arrangements to locate and return.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to the above if the child/young person is looked after and becomes formally reported as missing to the police the following actions should be taken:

- The practitioner must complete a ‘need to know’ and provide regular updates for children with a significant missing episode, missing for 24 hours or with repeating patterns of missing. See Ofsted Notifications and Need to Know for further information.
- Any foster carer or carer, including key worker in semi-independent accommodation, will inform any allocated social worker or duty worker, or if out of hours SOOHS. SOOHS call handlers will then inform the social worker/duty worker via ICS case notes. SOOHS Social Workers will not take any further action unless specifically requested (e.g. contact legal guardian of child/YP to inform them of the missing episode).
- Any HCC residential support worker will record on the child’s LCS file and ensure the social worker, duty social worker or the Safeguarding Out of Hours Service (SOOHS) is copied in and inform the parents and those with parental responsibility.
- The social worker will inform the parents and those with parental responsibility (unless the child is placed in a HCC residential children’s home).
- The social worker will inform the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and the Brokerage Service at the earliest opportunity. The IRO will attempt to contact the child during the missing episode and consider the need for an early review.
- Where a child looked after is placed out of Hertfordshire at a distance, police and Children’s Services will liaise with the Hertfordshire Missing Persons Unit (MPU). The provider will inform the social worker or the Safeguarding Out of Hours Service (SOOHS); who must log the notification on LCS. See Appendix 2 Pathways for children placed at a distance.
- The provider will inform OSTED in line with the Children’s Home Regulations when a child/young person is at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation.
- The police must be informed when the child or young person is found.
- The social worker will inform the United Kingdom Border Agency in relation to an asylum seeking child/young person and consider contacting CEOP Command (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre), which is a National Crime Command Agency for addressing crime, if there are indicators of the child/young person being trafficked.

For further details see http://www.ceop.police.uk/About-Us/
• If the child/young person is on an external activity i.e. outside Hertfordshire, the carer or member of staff will additionally notify the local police.

### 3.10 The Police Investigation

The police will undertake a face to face interview with the parent/carer/placement provider, who will provide detailed current information to enable the police to complete the Missing Persons Investigation Form and undertake a risk assessment. The police will request a copy of the Key Contacts and Basic Information Checklist where this is applicable i.e. for children looked after. Residential staff should usually fill in necessary paperwork before the police arrive.

The police inspector or sergeant categorises the risk, taking into account other factors that are not directly associated with the child/young person. This categorisation informs the appropriate level of investigation. It is an ongoing process and is actively reviewed throughout the investigation. It is undertaken for each separate incident of the child/young person going missing. The police inform the parent/carer and/or the allocated social worker of the current level of assessed risk which is *Missing*, *High Risk*, *Medium Risk* or *Absent* (Low Risk). For further information please see Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons. After 24 hours any assessment originally identifying that the child/young person is ‘Absent’ is then automatically changed to ‘Missing’ if they have not been found within that time.

N.B. Even after reporting a child/young person missing, all parties remain responsible for actively trying to find the child/young person during the police investigation.

### 3.11 Police Powers

Police powers are limited and difficulties can arise when missing children/young people are found but do not want to return to their placement or home. Any decision to use police powers should be made in conjunction with the relevant manager/Safeguarding Out of Hours Service (SOOHS) manager and where appropriate with the relevant manager from the private care provider.
Where there is reasonable cause to believe that the child/young person could suffer significant harm, the police can take the child/young person into police protection and remove the child/young person to suitable accommodation, with consultation with Children’s Services which could include the home from which the child/young person originally went missing. The police are not given the power to use force to take children/young people into police protection. This is however a difficult area, the expectation is that police and Children’s Services practitioners work together to agree a plan.

Children’s Services may consider application for a Recovery Order relation to children/young people subject to a Care Order or Emergency Protection Order

At any point the police may refer to the HALO Team which seeks to prevent and investigate cases of Child Sexual Exploitation in Hertfordshire.

3.12 Roles and Responsibilities: When a Missing Child/Young Person is Located or Returns

Sharing information:

- Whoever is the first to be aware that a child/young person has been located will ensure other parties involved with the child/young person’s care are informed. (Carer, parents, police or other agency).
- The police will be informed if a child/young person has returned after an absence without consent and is subject to a child or young person protection plan.
- The Missing Persons Unit of the policing area where the child/young person is residing will be informed.

Arranging for the return of the child/young person:

- Child Looked After: The social worker/practitioner or Safeguarding Out of Hours Service (SOOHS) worker /duty manager for residential care will assist carers in ensuring the child/young person’s safe return when necessary and agreed between parties e.g. arranging transport/liaising with the Police etc. Every effort should be made to have the young person returned to their placement without Police involvement. However, Police assistance should be sought if there are safety issues, or if risks at the location are not known.
• Practitioners will record on LCS when the child goes missing and when a child has been found. See Appendix 3 for Missing Persons LCS Procedures.

• Child (who is not Looked After): If the child/young person is found by family or friends it is their responsibility to return the child/young person to the home address, if it is safe to do so, or inform the police if it is not safe.

• The local authority will be responsible for making the decision as to whether a Looked After child or young person should return to their placement, taking into account the reason the child/young person went missing.

NB: For young people over the age of 18, police officers must be mindful that when an adult missing person is located, their whereabouts must not be disclosed if this is against their wishes. Police should inform the person reporting the individual missing that they have been located and reassure them about the person’s well-being.

Return of the child or young person:

• The child/young person will be given care and support with their immediate needs being met i.e. offered a hot drink, food and medical attention.

• The child/young person will be given the opportunity to talk about their experiences and any concerns they have will be taken seriously. In the first instance the Police will conduct a ‘Safe and Well Check’. Following the Police visit the social worker or children’s practitioner must visit (see section 3.14 regarding expectations of visits) each child and young person who are Looked After and those who live at home who meet the criteria to ascertain their well-being and they will offer the child or young person the opportunity to have an Independent Return Interview with their IRO or any professional the young person has a good relationship with and to whom they can speak openly. If the child or young person refuses to speak to an independent person, then the social worker or children’s practitioner must complete the return interview themselves.

Criteria for Visiting Children and Young People

• Child Looked After (for any period of time based on the Missing definition noted in section 1.1)

• Been missing for over 24 hours
- Been missing on two or more occasions (any historical instances of missing episodes should be considered)
- Engaged (or is believed to have engaged) in criminal activities during their absence
- Been hurt or harmed whilst they have been missing (or this is believed to have been the case)
- Known mental health issues
- Identified risk of sexual exploitation; and /or
- Contact with persons posing risk to children

- If a child or young person is returned home and considered to be at continued risk, a referral should be made to Customer Service Centre. Referrals can be made by the family, the Police returning the child or young person home or the professional conducting the return interview (see The Pledge for CLA Link detailing our role in keeping children and young people safe).
- Carers of CLA children should inform SOOHs if the child returns/ found out of hours.

If a young person cannot be returned home outside normal working hours, the decision to provide alternative accommodation will be made by the Safeguarding Out of Hours Service (SOOHS) manager in conjunction with the duty on- call senior manager.

3.13 Police Safe and Well Check

The Police Officer will conduct a Safe and Well Check to establish the well-being of the child/young person.

This will be a face to face interview by a Police Officer. The Police Officer will then update COMPACT, and notify other policing agencies as appropriate and the police national computer missing persons. The missing report will be ended within two hours of the officer’s update.

The Police will send the Missing Person’s Notification to the Customer Services Centre. (See Appendix 4 Customer Service Pathway).

3.14 The Independent Return Interview by Children Services
This is undertaken by Children Services’ TYS Team (aged 13 and over), the Safeguarding and Specialist Services (under 13’s). If the child or young person is already known to a department of Children’s Services, i.e. Thriving Families, Locality Team or Disabled Children’s Team, it is the case worker’s responsibility to discuss and arrange a return home interview and carry this out, unless an Independent Return Home Interview is being requested by the young person. For children/young people Looked After the Independent Review Team or an Independent Professional conducts the interview.

Return Interviews should be carried out within 72 hours of the child / young person being found and are conducted where one or more of the following criteria apply: (Applies to all Looked After children and young people and those living at home)

- Child Looked After (for any period of time based on the Missing definition noted in section 1.1)
- Been missing for over 24 hours
- Been missing on two or more occasions (any historical instances of missing episodes should be considered)
- Engaged (or is believed to have engaged) in criminal activities during their absence
- Been hurt or harmed whilst they have been missing (or this is believed to have been the case)
- Known mental health issues
- Identified risk of sexual exploitation; and /or
- Contact with persons posing risk to children

The Return Home Interview should be arranged rather than offered to the child or young person and their parents if they live at home. If the child/young person has an allocated worker, the interview will be arranged by the child/young person’s allocated worker. The allocated worker will visit the child / young person to ascertain their welfare and the child/young person must be asked whether they would prefer the return interview to be carried out by an independent worker. If the child / young person declines an independent interview, the allocated worker will conduct the return interview. If the child/young person agree to an independent interview, the allocated worker will refer to an independent person. The return interview must be completed within 72 hours of being located. The worker carrying out the return interview must visit the child or young person and try to speak with them rather than accepting a refusal over the phone alone.

It is best practice and the expectation is that the 72 hour visit will be completed by the allocated case worker. However, there are certain circumstances where this expectation cannot be met. This may be due to
situations such as distance of placement and missing episode frequency. In these circumstances a management decision needs to be sought and clearly recorded on the young person’s record re: the alternative home interview arrangement which will take place within the 72 hour requirement. Consideration should be given to the key worker within the placement or an alternative professional with an ongoing relationship with the child / young person.

If the child/young person is looked after the social worker will visit to ascertain the child/young person’s well-being and the Independent Return Interview will be carried out by an Independent Review Officer (IRO) or any other independent professional. The Social Worker will inform the young person of the role of the Independent Professional when they visit within 72 hours of their return to placement. The Social Worker will inform the IRO that a return interview is required, provide the IRO with any information that s/he has.

The worker should explore reasons for the missing episode and look at the support needs for the child/young person and the family including health needs e.g. sexual health, substance misuse or mental health related needs.

The Return Home Interview must be completed, using the Missing Person Return Interview form imbedded into the Missing Person Episode in LCS. NB: This form must be completed for ALL Missing Person Episodes opened on LCS, regardless of whether the Return Home Interview Criteria is met.

Where the Return Home Interview criteria has been met and the Return Home Interview has been completed, the Missing Person Assessment form imbedded into the Missing Person Episode in LCS must also be completed to assess the outcome of the Return Home Interview and Missing Person Episode – See Appendix 5 for further guidance on completed the Missing Person Episode Task and forms

A copy of this will be emailed to SEARCH@herfordshire.gov.uk by the social worker, for analysis of trends and patterns to provide a detailed picture of the risks encountered by children and young people who run away.

Where applicable the child young person’s risk assessment/risk management plan must be updated and any other plans amended accordingly (in consultation with the IRO if the child/young person is looked after).

If the child or young person informs the return interviewer of a matter that she/he feels should be shared with the police to safeguard the child or young person or other children/young people she or he must contact the Police Harm Reduction Unit: HRU@Herts.pnn.police.uk
3.15 Risk Management

Managing Risks

Hertfordshire Risk Management Manual provides guidance which includes risk assessment tools and outlines processes for managers and practitioners in managing risk in their work with children, young people and families in order to deliver statutory and voluntary interventions which are effective and of a high standard.

Further, the Manual aims to ensure our risk management systems are robust by supporting and assisting practitioners at all levels to approach the task of risk management with more confidence and competence and to clearly articulate their concerns to the appropriate forum.

Risk Management is everybody’s responsibility. There is benefit to be gained from a common approach across agencies, including a robust multi-agency risk management approach with shared resources to achieve greater integration, good communication and efficiency. Risk assessment and risk management must be embedded in the normal management processes of all agencies.

3.16 Sexual Exploitation and Runaway Children Panel (SEARCH) - See Glossary of Terms

The Risk Assessment Tool should be used as a referral to the panel, by any agency, if:

- Single Significant/High Risk missing episode
- Repeatedly running away
- Remains missing
- Continues to present concerns to professionals
- Is identified at risk of sexual exploitation or a victim of Sexual Exploitation

Additionally, professional judgement must consider if there are concerns that the child/young person is in danger through his or her own vulnerability. This might relate to a child/young person’s sexual exploitation, potential trafficking, honour based violence or forced marriage

For more information regarding SEARCH Panel, including the referral form, please see following link: www.hertsdirect.org/services/healthsoc/childfam/misscyp/
3.17 Missing Care Leaver Aged 18 Plus:

When a young person aged 18 and over goes missing, the personal advisor will:

- Ensure case records reflect when the young person went missing and when they were found.
- Ensure enquiries are made to locate the young person.
- Escalate the missing episode to the Team Manager to jointly determine further actions required, including reporting the young person missing to the Police.
- Ensure young people are visited and spoken to upon their return to assess their welfare and address missing episode.
- Ensure missed visits/appointments are followed up with young person immediately to ascertain their welfare; in particular for those who have a history of going missing.
- Ensure pathway plans address managing risks of young people with additional vulnerabilities (i.e. mental ill health, previous missing episodes, etc.)

The police will treat the young person as an adult and will lead on the search to find the missing young adult in keeping with their protocol in dealing with an ‘adult at risk’, which may include a “Safe and Well” check.

3.18 Children Looked After Placed At a Distance

The relevant protocols for both Local Authorities apply. Well managed and co-ordinated liaison is required. See Appendix 2 Pathways for children placed at a distance

The Brokerage Service informs other Local Authorities when HCC places a child or young person in another Local Authority area, and when a placement ends with the reason for this. This is required under Placement of Children Regulations. See Placement outside Hertfordshire in Social Work Procedures Manual for further information. https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DCSF-00185-2010

Where a child or young person who is looked after, is placed in Hertfordshire by another Local Authority, Children’s Services will provide information to assist the placing Local Authority – This may include attending a meeting or visiting the child e.g. Section 47 Strategy Discussion. If the issues are
primarily regarding safeguarding a child, it will be the Safeguarding or Specialist team, or if the issue primarily relates to the provider or accommodation service, it will be The Brokerage Service.
Appendix 1 | Glossary of Terms:

Please note many words are hyperlinked to the definitions. If you are looking at a paper copy you will need to access this document electronically or access the A to Z electronically at Keywords or see it at http://trixresources.proceduresonline.com/nat_key/index.htm

1. Basic Terms Relating to Children/Young People Who Go Missing

A young runaway is a young person under the age of 18 who has run away from their home or placement or feels they have been forced to leave, or lured to leave, or whose whereabouts are unknown.

A missing child/young person is a child/young person reported as missing to the police by his/her family or carers.

A child/young person who is looked after may be absent without consent (i.e. absented him/herself from local authority care and a decision has been reached not to report him/her to the police as missing) or have absconded i.e. run away from local authority care and a decision has been reached that has required reporting to the police.

A missing child/young person or young runaway is a child/young person absent from their home or placement, without consent for any length of time, where their age and experience, background and ability make this a concern, or who has been forced to leave by their parents or carers. This must be reported to the police, but this step should not be undertaken lightly and without due consideration to the needs of the child/young person. He or she will be considered missing until located and his or her wellbeing, or otherwise, established.

Child Sexual Exploitation – see 6.6 Safeguarding Children Abused through Sexual Exploitation
2. Police Definitions

**Missing:** Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.

**Absent:** A person is not at a place where they are expected or required to be.

**High risk:** the risk posed is immediate and there are grounds for believing the child/young 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 the public is in danger. Immediate police resources, media strategy and family support. Missing children Bureau notified.

**Medium risk:** the risk posed is likely to place the child/young person in danger or they are a threat to themselves or others. An active, measured police response and proactive investigation.

**Low risk or absent:** there is no apparent threat of danger to either the child/young person or the public. These will be monitored over time and escalated to ‘missing ‘if there is a change to the circumstances that has increased the level of risk. There will be agreed review times and ongoing actions. If a child is absent for more than 24 hours he or she is raised to medium or high risk.

3. General Terms Relating to Children/Young People

A child/young person is someone under the age of eighteen years. **Home** is the permanent residence of family, relatives and friends. **Parent**, refers to parents and carers, including friends, relatives, and private foster carers, as applicable. The young person may be **Fraser Competent** to make his or her own decisions.

The people/authorities that share **Parental Responsibility** for the child/young person are involved in decision making and sharing of information.

A child/young person who lives ‘away from home’ i.e. not with a parent who has responsibility for him or her

Under the age of 16 is not legally able to live independently away from home, without parental consent
Over the age of 16, consideration should be given to their physical and emotional needs when making a judgment as to whether they can live independently away from home.

A Looked After Child may be subject of an Interim Care Order or a Care Order or accommodated with parental agreement. If the child/young person is accommodated parental responsibility remains with the parent/guardian. When a child is over 16 years of age s/he may request to be accommodated.

Child Abduction is when a child/young person has been forcibly removed from their home. This is a ‘crime in action’ and should be reported to the police immediately. Anyone who ‘takes or detains’ a runaway under 16 without lawful authority may be prosecuted under Section 2 of the Child Abduction Act 1984.

A person who unlawfully removes, keeps away, assists or otherwise encourages a child/young person to run away or stay away from the ‘Responsible Person’ (A person who has care through a care order, Emergency Protection Order or Police Protection) may be guilty of an offence under section 49 of the Child Abduction Act 1984 and liable to prosecution.

Children’s Services may apply to the court for a Recovery Order if there are grounds to believe that s/he has been unlawfully taken away from the person responsible for his care, if he has run away or has been missing from care.

The Responsible Local Authority is the authority that is responsible for the young person’s care and care planning. The Host Local Authority is the authority in which the young person is placed when placed out of the responsible authority’s area. This relates to children/young people ‘looked after’ by other local authorities in private children’s homes, private agency foster carers, other local authority foster carers (including family and friends foster carers) or other semi-independent accommodation arranged by other local authorities, and children placed for adoption by other local authorities within Hertfordshire.

4. Children Service’s Terms:

A Multi-Agency Risk Management for Missing/Sexual Exploitation Meeting (MARMM/SEM) is convened by Children Services, when a child/young person is missing or at risk of repeat missing episodes. It is attended by The police, Children Services practitioner and his/her manager, residential social worker/foster carer, children home manager/supervising social worker, communications departments, anyone else relevant including
host local authority, and, where appropriate, parent and young person should be invited.

The Children Missing from Education Officer (CME) is responsible for monitoring all cases where children/young people are not receiving suitable education. The procedure outlining the Local Authorities Duties and the referral form is available to Children Service’s staff on the intranet.

CSC  Customer Service Centre
MASH  Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
TYSS  Targeted Youth Support Service
TF  Thriving Families
IRO  Independent Reviewing Officer

5. SEARCH Panel

Hertfordshire Sexual Exploitation and Runaway Children’s Panel (SEARCH), formerly known as MAMCAG, is a multi-agency panel. [SEARCH Panel Terms of Reference and Referral Form](#)

SEARCH shares information about individual missing children/young people to ensure multi-agency planning and prevent future running, on a monthly basis. Any of the constituent agencies may refer a child/young person.

SEARCH does not override individual agencies’ responsibility to take appropriate action for children/young people. It facilitates monitors and evaluates effective information sharing to enable appropriate actions, responding to individual children/young people who continue to provide ongoing concerns for professionals.

Referrals should be sent to the SEARCH Coordinator: [SEARCH@Hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:SEARCH@Hertfordshire.gov.uk)
Appendix 2 | Pathways for Children (CLA) Placed at a Distance

This Pathway is for Hertfordshire’s Children Looked after (CLA) who are placed at a distance (i.e. more than 20 miles for their home county), missing from care, are involved with offending and or are vulnerable to child sexual exploitation. The procedure applied for a child or young person placed at a distance, is the same as for a child or young person placed within Hertfordshire. However, there are some additional responsibilities for partner agencies and professionals involved with the child or young person. (See Children who go missing from home or care or are vulnerable to Child sexual exploitation procedure).

1. Pre-Placement Arrangements

Brokerage will:

- Notify the Host Local Authority of the child or young person who is looked after in their Local authority by providing basic details in respect of the child and the care provider prior to placement.
- Share the Placement Record Form with the care provider. This record of information will be provided by the social worker and will contain the vulnerabilities of the child or young person.
- Receive notifications of Children Looked After going missing for the purposes of monitoring the quality of the provider service.

The social work practitioner will:

- Inform the local Police Child Sexual Exploitation team of the new placement if the child or young person is at risk of sexual exploitation
- Inform Hertfordshire’s Youth Justice Team of the placement of the child in another Local Authority if the young person is known to the Youth Justice Service.
- Make contact with the Children Service’s Department of the Host Local Authority to arrange for missing notifications to be sent to the child’s named social worker.
- Inform Hertfordshire Missing Person Unit on MPU@Herts.pnn.police.uk if the child or young person has a repeat missing or absent history of 3 in 90 days or the young person is likely to return to Hertfordshire.
- Make contact with the Children Service’s Department of the Host Local Authority to arrange for missing notifications to be sent to the child’s named social worker.
The HALO Team will:

- Create a PNC Locate and Trace Number for the child or young person if it is believed that the child is a victim of child sexual exploitation in Hertfordshire or the offenders who are exploiting the child live in Hertfordshire and travel to the location where the child has been placed.
- HALO will liaise with HRU.

The Youth Justice Team will:

- Ensure a handover to the Host Youth Offending Team sharing all relevant information.

The Hertfordshire Missing Person Unit will:

- Update existing COMPACT record with placement information or create a skeleton COMPACT record if there is a reported or unreported history or 3 in 90 days missing or absent in any local authority.
- Submit the information on intelligence systems should a young person come to Police attention in any capacity.

2. Roles and Responsibilities of Professionals and Agencies Involved When a Child Looked After Goes Missing

The care provider will:

- Complete the Hertfordshire Key Contact Form and submit a copy to CLA social worker and Hertfordshire MPU.
- Make all reasonable efforts to locate the child or young person as soon as they are noted as missing or absent.
- If the child or young person cannot be located then the care provider will report the child or young person missing to the local police in the area.
- Share all known information with the police in respect of the missing child or young person. This to include: if the young person is on remand; an absconder; has an offending history; is known to the local Youth Offending Service (YOT); has a history of going missing; or is vulnerable to sexual exploitation.
- Must inform Hertfordshire Children Services practitioner directly and Brokerage via the notification’s inbox on CS.notifications@hertscc.gcsx.gov.uk or Safeguarding Children Services out of Hours of the missing episode and of actions taken.
The social work practitioner will:

- Follow the protocol for **Children who go missing from home or care or are vulnerable to sexual exploitation**
- Make contact with the police local to the child’s placement to establish progress and outcome of search and share any updating information to assist with the search of the missing child as soon as the alert is received.
- Work with the Missing Persons Co-ordinator for the relevant Police Service.
- **If the young person is involved in offending:** Contact the Youth Justice Manager (Bail and Remand) in Hertfordshire to check if the young person is known and inform of any identified concerns. Hertfordshire’s Youth Justice Bail and Remand officer will make contact with the Local Youth Offending team in the Host authority and communicate relevant information.
- Inform [hqsafeguarding@herts.police.pnn.uk](mailto:hqsafeguarding@herts.police.pnn.uk) if the child or young person is believed to be a victim of Child Sexual exploitation or at high risk of being sexually exploited within Hertfordshire or someone connected to Hertfordshire and is the subject of a HALO referral.
- Inform the Missing Person’s Unit in Hertfordshire if the young person **goes missing repeatedly** and returns to Hertfordshire
- Inform and updates the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO);
- Arrange a multi-professionals risk management meeting involving the local police and YOT service (where appropriate) for the purposes of information sharing and risk management in respect of the child or young person. The risks for the young person will need to be made clear to the police. The purpose of this meeting is to share information and agree actions which would assist in the search for the child or young person. Invitations for this meeting will need to be extended to Hertfordshire HALO (if subject of a Halo referral) or Hertfordshire Missing Persons Unit.
- Complete a Need to Know to inform of the missing young person and provide regular updates.
- Inform the parents where appropriate.
- Create a missing person’s alert on LCS
- Referral to SEARCH as soon as the criteria is met

3. **The Police**

**Host Authority Police will:**

- Lead on the search to find the missing child or young person in keeping with their protocol.
Hertfordshire HALO Team will:

- Share intelligence and information with the police involved in the search
- Receive/obtain regular updates on the search.
- Liaise with the social worker whilst the child or young person is missing.

If the child or young person goes missing repeatedly, Hertfordshire’s Missing Person Unit will:

- Become involved if the young person is found in Hertfordshire
- Become involved through the SEARCH panel.
- Share information and liaise with the Local Police involved in the search
- Record relevant information on COMPACT

If the young person is known to Hertfordshire’s Youth Justice Team, the Host Authority Youth Offending team will (as per the Youth Justice Transfer policy link document):

- Lead on following the Youth Justice Protocol for a Child Looked After who goes missing even if offending takes place in the host Local Authority.
- Be expected to share information with the police and the social worker and will need to be invited to attend professionals risk management meetings involved in the search for the missing child or young person.

Hertfordshire Youth Justice Service will:

- Check data base for current Youth Justice involvement
- Liaise with the Host YOT to see if they have any record of the young person and share all relevant information including if the young person is vulnerable to offending or sexual exploitation.
- Keep Child View up to date
- Offer specialist advice and support as required.
- Inform Host YOT when the child is found.

The single point of contact is the Practice Manager (Bail and Remand)

IRO will:

- Be kept up to date through LCS
- Attempt to make contact with the child or young person whilst they are missing or absent
4. Roles and Responsibilities of Professionals and Agencies Involved When a Child Looked After is Found:

Local Police in Host Local Authority will:

- Conduct a safe and well interview with the child and inform Children Services.
- Take actions to immediately safeguard the child or young person dependent on the risk assessment. This to be done in liaison with Hertfordshire Children’s Services (Safeguarding Children’s Service Out of hours team or with the social work team)
- If there are safeguarding concerns, hold a strategy discussion / professional’s information sharing meeting with the Local Children’s Service with the involvement of the child’s allocated social worker and Team Manager.

Local Youth Justice Team will:

- Follow the Youth Justice Protocol if the young person is known to their service
- Be involved multi-agency risk assessment and management meeting to prevent further missing episodes.

The social work practitioner will:

- Complete and finalise the missing person’s episode on LCS – See appendix 5 for further guidance
- Update all professionals involved.
- Update Need to Know
- Visit the child or young person as soon as they are found for a return interview
- Offer the child or young person an independent return interview with the IRO or independent advocate.
- Consider an independent advocate and funding for this to be requested.
- Give consideration to approaching the Host Authority to conduct a return interview if the child or young person repeatedly goes missing within a week.
- Arrange a multi-agency professional’s risk management meeting to reflect on the missing episode, what has been understood about the young person, consider actions to be taken in an effort to prevent further missing episodes as well as consider changes to the care or pathway plan.
The IRO will:

- Make contact with the child or young person.
- Conduct an independent return interview.
- Share information obtained with the child’s social worker.

5. Roles and Responsibilities of Professionals and Agencies Involved When a Care Leaver Aged 18 Plus Goes Missing:

Local Police in Host Local Authority will:

- Lead on the search to find the missing young adult in keeping with their protocol in dealing with an ‘adult at risk’, which may include a “Safe and Well” check.

The personal adviser will:

- Ensure case records reflect when the young person went missing and when they were found.
- Ensure enquiries are made to locate the young person.
- Escalate the missing episode to the Team Manager to jointly determine further actions required, including liaising with Police.
- Ensure young people are visited and spoken to upon their return to assess their welfare and address missing episode.
- Ensure missed visits/appointments are followed up with young person immediately to ascertain their welfare; in particular for those who have a history of going missing.
- Ensure pathway plans address managing risks of young people with additional vulnerabilities (i.e. mental ill health, previous missing episodes, etc.)
6. Pathway for missing children placed at a distance involved in criminal offending

Child/youth person is identified as **Missing** by carer

Care provider to report missing episode to

**Hertfordshire Children’s Services**
*Customer Services Centre/Out of Hours*

**Local Police Department**

Call/Case note will be placed to Case Worker and Practice Manager

**Trigger Missing Person’s Alert**
**Complete Need to Know**
**Inform Independent Review Officer**

Case worker/practice manager to contact

**Hertfordshire Youth Offending Team**

Out of County Youth Offending Team

Liaison

Regular liaison between departments

Team/Department

Action
7. Pathway for missing children placed at a distance involved in child sexual exploitation

Child/young person is identified as Missing by carer

Care provider to report missing episode to

Hertfordshire Children’s Services
(Customers Services Centre/Out of Hours)

Call/Case note will be placed to Case Worker and Practice Manager

Case worker/practice manager to contact

Local Police Department

Trigger Missing Person’s Alert

Complete Need to Know

Inform Independent Review Officer

Liaison

Hertfordshire Police HALO Team

Liaison

Out of County counterpart
(CSE Team)
8. **Pathway for missing children placed at a distance who are repeatedly missing**

Child/young person is identified as **Missing** by carer

- **Care provider to report missing episode to**
  - Hertfordshire Children's Services *(Customer Services Centre/Out of Hours)*
  - Local Police Department

- **Call/Case note will be placed to Case Worker and Practice Manager**
  - Trigger Missing Person's Alert
  - Complete Need to Know
  - Inform Independent Review Officer

- **Case worker/practice manager to contact**

- **Liaison**
  - Hertfordshire Police Missing Person Unit
  - SEARCH Panel
9. Pathway for missing children placed at a distance involved in criminal offending or child sexual exploitation

Child/young person is found by police, placement or Children’s Services

Local Police Department

- No safeguarding concerns identified
  - Conduct Safe & Well Interview
  - Arrange return to placement

Hertfordshire Children’s Services

- Discussion regarding Safeguarding plans
  - Yes
  - No (refusal) → Risk Assessment

- Strategy discussion— including local Children’s Services

- Update Missing Person’s Alert
- Update Need to know
- Inform relevant agencies i.e. YOT
- Conduct Return Home Interview
- SEARCH Panel Referral
Appendix 3 | Missing Children Referral Pathway

**Missing Person’s Notification**

**Hertfordshire Child / Young Person**

- Open Case on LCS
- Open Case on IES
- Closed to Children’s Services

Customer Service Centre will forward the missing person notification to missing.c&yp@hertfordshire.gov.uk

**Child / Young Person of other local authority**

- CLAe
- OLA

Customer Service Centre will add a LCS Case Note for information only and notify the relevant local authority of the missing episode via email

Customer Service Centre will add a LCS Case Note for information only and notify the relevant local authority of the missing episode via email

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Missing and Vulnerable Children Procedure V2 Sept 2015
New Contact Record to Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

Contact Record and Missing Person Episode Task received at MASH

Assess Missing Person episode against the Return Home Interview Criteria

- Return Home Interview Criteria met
- Return Home Interview Criteria not met

Is the child/young person under 13yrs?

- No
- Yes

Re-assign Contact Record and Missing Person Episode Task to TYS

If yes; re-assign Contact Record and Missing Person Episode Task to Assessment Team

If no; provide advice, guidance and signpost as necessary

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:
You MUST complete the following sections of the Missing Person Episode Task for EACH Missing Episode:
- Casenote Tab of the Missing Episode Task – All enquiries to be recorded in Casenote Tab of the Missing Episode Task
- Risk Section of ‘Missing’ Tab
- Return Home Interview Section of ‘Found’ Tab
- Forms Tab: Missing Person Return Interview Form

For Further guidance see Appendix 5
New Contact Record to Thriving Families

Contact Record and Missing Person Episode Task received at Thriving Families

Assess Missing Person episode against the Return Home Interview Criteria

Return Home Interview Criteria met

Offer and arrange Return Home Interview

*Ideally this should be offered within 72 hours of the child/you person returning home*

Is the child/young person under 13yrs?

No

Re-assign Contact Record and Missing Person Episode Task to TYS

Yes

If yes; re-assign Contact Record and Missing Person Episode Task to Assessment Team

Return Home Interview Criteria not met

Significant Safeguarding concerns identified through enquiries or information received from police

No

If no; provide advice, guidance and signpost as necessary

Yes

Importantly, you MUST complete the following sections of the Missing Person Episode Task for EACH Missing Episode:

- Case Note Tab of the Missing Episode Task – All enquiries to be recorded in Case Note Tab of the Missing Episode Task
- Risk Section of ‘Missing’ Tab
- Return Home Interview Section of ‘Found’ Tab
- Forms Tab: Missing Person Return Interview Form

For further guidance, see Appendix 5
New Contact Record to Targeted Youth Support Team

Contact Record and Missing Person Episode Task received at TYS

Consideration to be given to contacting family and/or Missing Person’s Unit to discuss the Missing Episode

Offer and arrange Return Home Interview
_Ideally this should be offered within 72 hours of the child/you person returning home_

Liaise with partner agencies, including Missing Persons Unit and HALO where appropriate, to gather any further intelligence and share the outcome of the Return Home Interview
_Conideration to holding a MARM/SEM should be given if child/young person is a repeat missing person_

Provide advice, guidance and signpost as necessary

Significant Safeguarding concerns identified though enquiries or information received from police

Yes

Consideration to progress to C&F Assessment

No

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:
You MUST complete the following sections of the Missing Person Episode Task for EACH Missing Episode:
- Case Note Tab of the Missing Episode Task – All enquiries to be recorded in Case Note Tab of the Missing Episode Task
- Risk Section of ‘Missing’ Tab
- Return Home Interview Section of ‘Found’ Tab
- Forms Tab : Missing Person Return Interview Form

For Further guidance see Appendix 5
New Contact Record to Assessment Team

Contact Record and Missing Person Episode Task received at Assessment Team

Consideration to be given to contacting family and/or Missing Person’s Unit to discuss the Missing Episode

Offer and arrange Return Home Interview

*Ideally this should be offered within 72 hours of the child/you person returning home*

Liaise with partner agencies, including Missing Persons Unit and HALO where appropriate, to gather any further intelligence and share the outcome of the Return Home Interview

*Consideration to holding a MARMM/SEM should be given if child/you person is a repeat missing person*

Provide advice, guidance and signpost as necessary

**No**

Significant Safeguarding concerns identified though enquiries or information received from police

Yes

Consideration to progress to C&F Assessment

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**
You MUST complete the following sections of the Missing Person Episode Task for EACH Missing Episode:

- **Case Note Tab of the Missing Episode Task** – All enquiries to be recorded in Case Note Tab of the Missing Episode Task
- **Risk Section** of ‘Missing’ Tab
- **Return Home Interview Section** of ‘Found’ Tab
- **Forms Tab** : Missing Person Return Interview Form

For Further guidance see **Appendix 5**
Safeguarding & Specialist Services

Where a child is known to Specialist Services and Safeguarding Teams and NOT a Child Looked After

Case Note and Missing Person Episode Task received at Safeguarding and Specialist Services

Consideration to be given to contacting family and/or Missing Person’s Unit to discuss the Missing Episode

Liaise with partner agencies, including Missing Persons Unit and HALO where appropriate, to gather any further intelligence

Consideration to holding a MARMM/SEM should be given if child/young person is a repeat missing person

Offer and arrange Return Home Interview
Ideally this should be offered within 72 hours of the child/you person returning home

Consider need for further intervention i.e. S47 Strategy Discussion

Is the Return Home Interview Criteria met?

Yes

No

Provide advice, guidance and continue to offer support/service

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:
You MUST complete the following sections of the Missing Person Episode Task for EACH Missing Episode:
- Case Note Tab of the Missing Episode Task – All enquiries to be recorded in Case Note Tab of the Missing Episode Task
- Risk Section of ‘Missing’ Tab
- Return Home Interview Section of ‘Found’ Tab
- Forms Tab: Missing Person Return Interview Form

For Further guidance see Appendix 5
Children Looked after

Where a child is of CLA Status regardless of which Hertfordshire Children’s Services Team they are open to

Case Note and Missing Person Episode Task received at Safeguarding and Specialist Services

Contact placement/carer to discuss the Missing Episode

Liaise with partner agencies, including Missing Persons Unit and HALO where appropriate, to gather any further intelligence

Consideration to holding a MARM/SEM should be given if child/young person is a repeat missing person

Liaise with IRO to arrange Return Home Interview

Ideally this should be offered within 72 hours of the child/you person returning home

Consider need for further intervention i.e. SEARCH Panel

Is the Return Home Interview Criteria met?

Yes

No

Provide advice, guidance and continue to offer support/service

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:
You MUST complete the following sections of the Missing Person Episode Task for EACH Missing Episode:

- Case Note Tab of the Missing Episode Task – All enquiries to be recorded in Case Note Tab of the Missing Episode Task
- Risk Section of ‘Missing’ Tab
- Return Home Interview Section of ‘Found’ Tab
- Forms Tab: Missing Person Return Interview Form

For Further guidance see Appendix 5
Appendix 4 | LSC Missing Person Episode Task Guidance Notes

1 | How to Access a Missing Person Episode Task

A Missing Person Record will be created for all Hertfordshire Children who are reported missing. Unless re-assigned to a designated LCS User, the task will appear in the Work Tray of the person who has created the Missing Person Record.

To enter into the Missing Person Episode, click on the Task Description from your Work Tray.

![Example of what an outstanding Missing Person Episode Task will look like in your Work Tray](image1)

You can view/access other Missing Person Episodes, by selecting the Additional Tab from the child/young person’s LCS Record – Anyone can Update the Missing Person Episode Task, however this can only be finalised by the person who has been assigned the task, in their Work Tray.

![Example of child/young person’s Missing Person Record](image2)
2 | The Missing Person Episode

The Missing Person Episode Task consists of five navigation tabs displayed on the left hand side of the screen. Information relating to the Missing Episode must be entered within the relevant sections of the Missing Person Record and is further explained as follows:

2.1 | Episode Tab

The Episode tab displays information which has been recorded in the Missing and Found tab’s accessible through selecting ‘Update Missing Episode Record’ - in most cases this would have already been completed by the Customer Service Centre on receipt of a Missing Person Notification / Found Person Notification.

From this screen, the following actions are available:

**Update Missing Person Record**

By selecting this, the Missing and Found tabs are accessible and can be updated. The case worker/team responsible is required to update sections within both Missing and Found tabs.

**Re-Assign Episode Task**

The Episode Task will remain an outstanding LCS task until the record has been finalised, however this task can only be finalised by the person who has the task in their LCS tray.

**Finalise Missing Person Record**

Once all the relevant sections of the Missing Person Episode have been completed, the episode can be finalised and task will disappear.

![Example of Episode Tab of Missing Person Episode - indicated, in yellow, are sections which would have been completed by the Customer Service Centre](image-url)
The Caseworker/Team responsible is required to Update Missing Person Record and complete sections within the Missing and Found tab, as follows:

2.1 (i) | Missing Tab

The Caseworker/Team responsible is required to complete the following sections:

**What to do and who to contact**

*Please complete this if you are aware of any specific instructions should the child/young person become found*

**Risk**

*All sections must be completed by the case worker/team:*

*Risk Factor: If none are known then please specify*

*Risk Assessment Completed: Answer Yes or No with either instructions of where the Risk Assessment can be located or why this was not completed*

*Type of Risk (x4): Using information provided in the Found Person Notification from Herts Police or through making enquiries with professionals, carers or the child/YP, please ensure all four Risk Types are answered using the drop-box*

Please see below, an example of the Missing tab screen indicating (in yellow) those sections which are completed by the person creating the missing person record (generally Customer Service Centre); and in red, those sections required to be completed by the case worker/team responsible; and in orange, to be completed by the case worker/team responsible where applicable.

![Example of Missing Tab within the Episode Tab of Missing Person Episode](image-url)

*Example of Missing Tab within the Episode Tab of Missing Person Episode*
2.1 (ii) | Found Tab

The Caseworker/Team responsible is required to complete the following sections:

Return Interview

*This section must be completed by the person completing the Return Home interview*

*Date Return Interview Completed* – Insert the date the Return Home Interview was conducted

*Return Interview Completed by* – Insert the name of the professional who has conducted the Return Home Interview

*Additional Information* – Summarise whether or not the Return Home Interview Criteria is met/not met and accepted/declined.

Please see below, an example of the Found tab screen indicating (in yellow) those sections which are completed by the person ending the current missing person record (generally Customer Service Centre); and in red, those sections required to be completed by the case worker/team responsible; and in orange, to be completed by the case worker/team responsible where applicable.

Example of Missing Tab within the Episode Tab of Missing Person Episode
2.2 | Forms tab

Within the Forms tab of the Missing Person Record, there are two documents imbedded which, once completed, will be accessible through the Missing Person Episode or the main Forms Tab

Missing Person Return Interview Form

*This form must be completed for each Missing Person Record, regardless of whether the Return Home Interview Criteria is met. Where the Return Home Interview Criteria is met, you will be presented with the question set that should be used during the Return Home Interview with the child/young person – See further guidance below*

More than one Missing Person Return Interview form can be completed for one single Missing Episode for cases where multiple Return Home Interviews have taken place i.e. where a Return Home Interview has been conducted by Social Worker followed by an additional Independent Return home Interview

Missing Person Assessment Form

*This form must be completed following a Return Home Interview as a professional assessment for the missing episode*
2.2 (i) Missing Person Return Interview Form – To be completed for each Missing Person Episode

If answering ‘No’ to ‘Has a Return Home Interview been offered?’, the form can be finalised. However, if you answer ‘Yes’ to this question, you will be presented with further questions regarding the Return Home Interview.

If the Return Home Interview has been offered, you will be presented with a further question with regards to ‘Has the Return Home Interview been accepted?’. Selecting ‘Yes’ will enable the Questions for return interview to be accessible in order for the Return Home Interview to take place, as indicated in the example below.

You will also be prompted to re-assign this task to the person carrying out the Return Home Interview, i.e. IRO, if this is an Independent Return Home Interview. Alternatively, if the Independent Person is from an external agency, i.e. School, you will need to print a copy of the Questions used during the interview in order for the Return Home Interview to take place and you are responsible for ensuring the information is entered on LCS.

Missing Person Return Interview Form

If answering ‘No’ to ‘Has a Return Home Interview been offered?’, the form can be finalised.
A copy of the **Questions for return interview** can be printed in order for this to be completed with the young person during the Return Home Interview – See guidance below

Any changes can be saved and you can close this screen, returning to the Missing Person Episode. The form will be saved as a draft in the **Forms** tab of the Missing Episode and will be an outstanding task in your **Work Tray** as shown below –

**In order to update the Missing Person Return Interview form, you must access this via your Work Tray**

[Image of Work Tray]

**Work Tray**

[Image of Missing Person Episode > Forms tab]

**Missing Person Episode > Forms tab**
2.2 (ii) | Missing Person Assessment Form – To be completed if a Return Home Interview has taken place

Following a Return Home Interview, an assessment for the Missing Episode must be completed, known as the Missing Person Assessment Form. There are four sections to this form as follows:

**Missing Person Record**

The information recorded in this section is automatically generated using the information recorded in the Missing Person Episode ‘Missing’ and ‘Found’ tabs

**Return Interview**

The information required in this section is information obtained from any enquiries made and during the Return Home Interview

**Summary**

This section is in relation to the young person’s support needs and summary of the missing episode and missing history.

**Signatures**

This section is to record the details of the persons

Any changes can be saved and you can close this screen to return at a later time.

The form will be saved as a draft in the **Forms** tab of the Missing Episode and will be an outstanding task in your **Work Tray** as shown below –

*In order to update the Missing Person Assessment form, you must access this via your Work Tray*

![Work Tray](image1.png)

![Missing Person Episode > Forms tab](image2.png)
2.3 | Case Notes tab

The Case Notes tab allows you to add Case Notes specific to the Missing Person Episode and will be later accessible through the Missing Person Episode and the main Case Notes Tab – Please use this to record any enquiries/information relating to the Missing Episode or any information relating to the Return Home Interview.

NB: Within the Case Note, please specify the date of the missing episode the case note relates to i.e. further to Missing Episode from [insert date/time]...

3 | Missing Person Episode Check List for Case Worker / Team Responsible

Before finalising a Missing Person Episode Task, the check list below is a summary of the actions which must have been completed prior.

Indicates actions which need to be completed for each missing person episode

The LSC Missing Person Episode Task Guidance Notes sets out instructions for completing each section so please ensure this is read in conjunction to the summary below

Missing Person Episode > Episode Tab > Missing Tab
- ☑ Risk Section has been completed
- ☐ What to do and how to contact section has been completed; were applicable

Missing Person Episode > Episode Tab > Found Tab
- ☑ Return Interview Section has been completed

Missing Person Episode > Forms Tab
- ☑ Missing Person Return Interview form has been completed and finalised
- ☐ Missing Person Assessment Form has been completed and finalised; were applicable

Missing Person Episode > Casenotes Tab
- ☑ Case notes relating to the Missing Person Episode have been added
- ☑ All Case notes are finalised
For further LCS guidance on changes to the Missing Person Functionality –

Version 10 of Liquid Logic Children’s System introduces new screens for the recording of Missing and Found Persons.