

Littletown Primary Academy

**(following guidance from
Devon County Council
People's Services)**

Children and Young People Missing

Policy and Guidance

**Joint arrangements agreed by
Devon Safeguarding Children Board
September 2013**

**Policy update prepared by representatives of Missing and Child
Sexual Exploitation Forum
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Missing Children

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Introduction

Children and Young People who go missing are amongst the most vulnerable members of society. This policy and guidance aims to ensure that everyone involved with a child or young person who is missing understands that:

- Children and young people who are missing are *everyone's* responsibility
- Our approach to dealing with missing episodes needs to be child centred and to recognise their vulnerability
- Early intervention, robust risk assessment and risk management can interrupt escalation to higher levels of risk and keep children and young people safe
- There are often complex 'push and pull' factors that can for example, push young people away from difficult circumstances, or pull them into risky situations. The most frequent reason given is 'problems at home'. Physical abuse from adults, mental health and substance misuse problems, and involvement in criminality are commonly associated with children running away. Missing children are at a high risk of physical and sexual abuse, criminality and homelessness. Persistent running away is increasingly understood to be an indicator that a child may be a victim of sexual exploitation.¹

1: Children and Young People living away from home in foster care, children's homes or residential schools are in a particular risk group. Children in care are three times more likely to go missing from their home than children who are not in care,² although the reasons for this are complex and not yet fully understood.

¹ *Report from the joint enquiry into children who go missing from care*, The All Party Parliamentary Group for Runaway and Missing Children and Adults and the All Party Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers, 2012, p12: www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-lobbying/parliamentary-work/appg-inquiry-children-who-go-missing-or-run-away-c.

² *Missing Children*, OFSTED, published February 2013, Reference number 120364, p 7

Principles

2:

- ◆ This policy applies to all children and young people (up to age eighteen) who go missing or run away regardless of their living situation.
- ◆ Each child's circumstances will be unique and careful assessment will be required to weigh up the risks and to determine if the child is considered to be 'absent' or 'missing'.³ As it is not possible to anticipate every situation, this policy should be applied as guidance, using professional judgement.
- ◆ This policy has been agreed by the Devon Safeguarding Children Board, and applies to all representative agencies, whether of a statutory or non-statutory nature
- ◆ Agencies will work with parents and carers and may request them to take as many reasonable steps as possible to locate the missing child or young person by:
 - taking initial responsibility to look locally for the child / young person;
 - if the child / young person tries to leave, parents and carers will use their judgement, talk to and/ or follow them;
 - parents and carers will contact family, friends and known associates to try and locate the child;
 - look for them in known haunts (making sure they remain safe)

Scope

3: This policy and guidance operates beneath the Home Office 'Missing Children and Adults – Cross Government Strategy', 2011.

3:1 Devon has adopted the three P's set out in the cross government strategy:

Prevention – reducing the number of people who go missing

Protection – reducing the risk of harm to those who go missing

Provision – providing missing people and their families with support and guidance⁴

Further, Devon has added a fourth P:

Practice – ensuring cross agency consistency of practice; being child centred, assessing and reviewing risk to work towards the safe return of children and young people

Definitions

4: At the time of writing, the Association of Chief Police Officers has issued 'Interim guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons, 2013'⁵ – it is from this document that Devon takes its lead for

³ *Interim Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons*, 2013, Association of Chief Police Officers and College of Policing, p5

⁴ *Missing Children and Adults – Cross Government Strategy*, 2011, Home Office, p5

⁵ *Interim Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons*, 2013, Association of Chief Police Officers and College of Policing, p5

definitions, as follows:

Missing

4:1 “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.”⁶

Guy is 13 he went to school this morning and after morning registration he left. No one knows where he has gone. Guy has done this before and returned home of his own accord by lunchtime. The parents cannot be contacted and all enquiries have been done to try and see if Guy has returned home by the same time. He still cannot be located and he has not returned to school. What do you do?

Guy is missing and should be reported as missing as this is now outside his known truanting behaviour (this does not need to be reported by parents, anyone can report the matter).

Absent

4:2 “A person not at a place where they are expected or required to be.”

The guidance further advises that from the police perspective, the ‘absent’ category should comprise cases in which people are not presently where they are supposed to be and there is no apparent risk. ‘Absent’ cases should not be ignored, and must be monitored over periods of time with consideration given to escalating to ‘missing’ if there is a change to the circumstances that has increased the level of risk. This approach applies to all agencies.

4:3 Note: This policy does not specifically cover incidents of abduction, which is a criminal offence and which should be reported immediately to the police. When this is suspected, a strategy meeting must be called immediately, to include legal representation, to decide whether an application should be made for a Recovery Order under Section 50 of the Children Act 1989.

Risk Management

5: This guidance should be read in tandem with the South West Peninsula Child Sexual Exploitation Standard Operating Protocol.⁷

Assessing Risk of Missing

5:1 The risk assessment tool (Referral Risk Assessment CSE 2)⁸ gives a risk assessment score for risk of sexual exploitation, and also offers useful indicators of risk across the wider ‘missing’ spectrum. It is recommended that this tool is considered for use when any child or young person is missing.

⁶ *Interim Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons*, 2013, Association of Chief Police Officers and College of Policing, p5

⁷ South West Peninsula Child Sexual Exploitation Standard Operating Protocol, launched 27th March 2013, endorsed by the Local Safeguarding Children Boards of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, Devon, Plymouth and Torbay.

⁸ South West Peninsula Child Sexual Exploitation Standard Operating Protocol, launched 27th March 2013, endorsed by the Local Safeguarding Children Boards of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, Devon, Plymouth and Torbay, p30

In managing risk, workers need to be mindful of the descriptive language which can be used to describe children and young people, which can influence the level of risk attached to their vulnerability. 'Streetwise', 'repeat absconder', 'putting him or herself at risk' can conjure different images than 'street homeless', 'frequently missing', 'at risk of abuse'. Many short periods of missing can be as damaging as fewer longer periods, depending on what is happening to the young person whilst they are away.

A range of 'push' and 'pull' factors may be reasons for being absent, including:

5:2 Push factors – conflict with parent(s) / carer(s), feeling powerless, bullying, being unhappy where they live, physical or sexual abuse.

5:3 Pull factors – wanting to be with family or friends, peer pressure, established behaviour, manipulation by exploitative adults.

Steve is 15 he told his parents he was going to stay with a school friend. His parents have found out that he has gone somewhere else they have concerns that he is with a 28 old male and there is a sexual aspect to their relationship. Steve's parents have rung him on his mobile and he has told them he is fine and he will be home tomorrow. His parents still don't know where he is.

Steve is missing he is not where he is supposed to be and he may be at risk.

5:4 Risk assessing 'absent'

In line with the APCO guidance⁹, the circumstances of a child who is absent (including those who are involved in repeat absences) should be monitored, and continuously risk assessed. To assist this process the Referral Risk Assessment CSE 2¹⁰ is recommended.

5:5 Parents and carers of any 'absent' child or young person should be offered help, advice and guidance in managing the risk and establishing the whereabouts of the child. When the location of the child is known, every effort should be made to bring about the child's return, if necessary involving the police in instances where substantial risk is established.

5:6 Anyone who 'takes or detains' a runaway under 16 without lawful authority may be prosecuted under Section 2 of the Child Abduction Act 1984. Where children and young people are repeat missing persons and continue to be harboured by the same individual consideration should be given to prosecution under the Child Abduction Act 1984 by the second occasion. For any child for whom the local authority is the corporate parent, e.g. children on FCO, ICO, EPO and PPO and up to age of 18 the social worker should consider the use of Section 49 of the Children Act 1989 and if appropriate supply a statement of complaint to the police in order for a warning notice to be served on any person over 16 (if on two or more occasions that person has been encouraging the child to stay away from his or her placement.)

⁹ *Interim Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons*, 2013, Association of Chief Police Officers and College of Policing

¹⁰ South West Peninsula Child Sexual Exploitation Standard Operating Protocol, launched 27th March 2013, endorsed by the Local Safeguarding Children Boards of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, Devon, Plymouth and Torbay, p30

5:7 A child who is considered 'absent' may be re-categorised to a 'missing child' where an appropriate change in the risk assessment supports this course of action.

5:8 Where the child is a child in care under section 20, Children Act, 1989, (voluntary accommodated) or section 31, Children Act, 1989 (Care Order) the parent / guardian will be consulted to contribute to the risk assessment unless the care plan deems otherwise.

Jane was due home at 1930hrs. She had been visiting a friend from school and is late home. Her mum rings her and has an argument with Jane about her being late home. Jane says she is not coming home and is staying with her friend.

Based on this information Jane is not missing she is absent. Jane does not need to be reported to the police unless her mum does not later know where she is.

Prevention

6: Where there is a known likelihood that a child may go missing, a risk assessment should be made. The risk assessment should also consider the child's siblings and any other children in the household/residential home and a risk management meeting held to consider the risks they may face, and a plan made by the agency who knows the child best. Schools play an important part in safeguarding young people who are at risk of becoming missing, particularly through ensuring swift admission to school, monitoring attendance, reducing exclusion and identifying disengagement from school life. Education providers need to consider the Devon Children Missing Education Protocol¹¹ alongside this guidance, to ensure that every opportunity is taken to maximise cross agency collaborative working if risks are escalating for a child or young person.

6:1 Educating young people regarding the potential risks associated with missing episodes, and how to access support and help if they are worried about a friend is a key role for schools, in conjunction with Devon Safeguarding Children Board partners. Missing and CSE locality groups are being formed (as of July 2013) to give local practitioners opportunity to access consultation, share local knowledge and divert appropriate resources to achieve preventative measures for children who go missing.

6:2 It is important to include the views of the child or young person in any risk assessment (and their friends and family where possible) to inform the way in which they see their own situation. For young people who are at risk of or subject to sexual abuse through exploitation, they may not see themselves as being in an abusive situation, and therefore be unable or unwilling to perceive the risk.

¹¹ *Children Missing Education, Procedures and Protocol*, Babcock and Devon County Council, May 2013

6:3 The child / young person should have the risk assessment explained to him / her and the potential dangers that they may encounter so that s/he begins to gain an understanding of the implications of running away.

Protection

7: In order to reduce the risk of harm to children and young people who go missing, each agency needs a clear understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities.¹² Information exchange is a key aspect of protection work, and agencies should provide the police with relevant information to reduce the risk of harm to missing children and young people.

7:1 The police are responsible for conducting 'safe and well' checks to establish that a missing child has returned. For those young people who have been risk assessed as 'absent' rather than 'missing' the parent or carer should ensure that the police or social care are notified as appropriate when the child returns.

7:2 'Return home' interviews for children who have been deemed to be 'missing' are an important protection mechanism. In Devon there will be a joint approach for conducting return home interviews. From August 2013 The Devon Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing Children Unit specialist youth workers will conduct the return home interviews for children who do not have a named social worker. Ideally for children in care, or those who have a named social worker, all return home interviews should be conducted by an independent person, however due to current capacity issues the social worker will be asked to conduct the return home interviews unless it is agreed that an independent person is more appropriate. Feedback to key agency staff e.g. schools must be given promptly. An up to date risk assessment must be completed and include impact on siblings and any other children in the household/residential home.

Determining the level of risk

7:3 The police will determine the level of risk in relation to deploying police resources to investigate missing persons. Collated information from all safeguarding partners will assist in determining this level of risk. Immediate higher level risks will require a different but potentially no less potent response than risks borne of repeat missing episodes, and the relevant agencies will need to ensure that all relevant information informs the assessment of the level of risk a child is at.

Provision

Timescales and Actions to be taken

8.0 This policy promotes the need to treat each instance of a missing child as a unique situation and therefore does not recommend prescribed timescales for actions to be taken.

8.1 An exception to this is that all 'absences' and a child 'missing' from local authority care which exceeds 24 hours must be recorded by the social worker on the electronic record system (CareFirst). The Advanced Professional will

¹² *Missing Children and Adults – Cross Government Strategy*, 2011, Home Office, p16 (Refer to flow chart)

then advise their Operations Manager if a child is still missing 24 hours after the initial notification. This subsequently forms part of a central government return.

8.2 Consideration should be given to the timing of a strategy meeting if the whereabouts of the missing child remains unknown or is deemed to be posing a risk. Where a child is missing for a considerable period of time (e.g. over a week) the Head of Service (Children's Social Work) must arrange a formal review of what is happening on a regular basis. The case must be kept open until the child is found.

Practice

9.0 This guidance emphasises the need for *all* agencies to work together to reduce the risk of children going missing, to minimise the time that they are missing, and to reduce the chance of repeat missing episodes. Within that context, some agencies have specific responsibilities as outlined below.

Police

9.1 Police colleagues to adhere to most up to date APCO guidance – at the time of writing, the 2010 guidance is still in force, but is supplemented by the Interim Missing Persons Guidance 2013.¹³

The police will require the following initial information when reporting a child missing:

- Full name and any aliases and date of birth
- Description of the child and their clothing when last seen
- Does the child have any disability, including learning disability?
- Home address, placement address, family addresses
- Any previous history of absconding / absenteeism and circumstances where found.
- Known associates and addresses frequented
- Circumstances under which child is absent and location missing from
- Details of any vehicle or other transport used
- Outcome of risk assessment determined by the person reporting
- Name and contact details of the person reporting
- Copy of latest risk assessment (if any)
- If in care placement, local authority and social worker details and status in care
- School attended and/or status e.g. Permanently excluded – note, by day six of an exclusion, a child should be back in education or if subject to a fixed period exclusion, parents/carers have responsibility to supervise their child during the school day

The police will also require information to help determine the level of risk, including:

1. What is the specific concern in this instance?
2. What has been done so far to trace this individual?
3. Is this significantly out of character?
4. Are there any specific medical needs?
5. Are they likely to be subjected to crime?
6. Are they likely to be the victim of abuse?

¹³ *Interim Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons*, 2013, Association of Chief Police Officers and College of Policing

7. Are they currently at risk of Sexual Exploitation?
8. Are they likely to attempt suicide?
9. Do they pose a danger to other people?
10. Is there any other information relevant to their absence?

9.2 The police may require further information to better assess the risk to a particular child or young person, so anyone reporting an absence, should be prepared to provide as much information as possible.

Education

9.3 Schools and other education settings must consider the links between children and young people who are out of education or missing their education and the potential risks which those young people could be placed under whilst absent from school. Elective Home Education Officers must follow procedures in relation to children at potential risk. There will be opportunities for education professionals to seek advice and guidance through the three locality CSE and Missing Groups.

Social Care

9.4 The Advanced Professional for the REACH Team will arrange for data to go to the Heads of Service (Children's Social Work and Education and Learning) on a weekly basis of children who are missing from care.

Notification of Absence

Children missing from Home

10.0 For children / young people who have been reported to the police as missing or absent from home, the police will then liaise with the parents / carers to monitor risks.¹⁴

10.1 Any child / young person missing from home which causes particular concern to the police and / or the parents / carers should be referred to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) for consideration of an initial assessment. Children's Social Work will inform the parents / carers and the police of the outcome of any referral and assessment. Where appropriate, the professional involved should agree with the parents regarding informing the child's school or educational setting of his or her absence at the earliest opportunity.

Pauline is 5 years old. She lives with her mum and has contact with her Dad every other weekend. Following weekend contact Dad has chosen not to return Pauline to mum. There is nothing to suggest Pauline is at any risk in the care of her Dad.

Pauline is not missing. Mum needs to seek legal advice in respect of a recovery order.

The police only need to be called if there is information to suggest Pauline is at risk of harm. In that case the police will conduct a welfare check. If the

¹⁴ *Interim Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons*, 2013, Association of Chief Police Officers and College of Policing, p15, Appendix A – Absence Management

Police do conduct a welfare check and have no concerns they have no power to remove the child from the care of Dad.

10.2 If the child is a 'Child in Need' the social worker or social work family practitioner will;

- Record on the child / young person's file that they are missing
- Make contact with the family to provide support
- Inform their Advanced Professional
- Review the child's plan
- If the child / young person is missing longer than twenty four hours the relevant Operations Manager will be informed and safeguarding processes considered.
- Inform the child's school, or educational setting or Elective Home Education Officer

10.3 If the child is subject to a Child Protection plan the social worker will;

- Record on the child / young person's file that they are missing
- Inform their Advanced Professional immediately
- Make contact with the family to provide support and assess the risks to the child / young person
- If the child / young person is missing longer than twenty four hours the Independent Reviewing Unit Operations Manager will be informed
- The Social Work Operations Manager and Independent Reviewing Unit Operations Manager will consider the need to re-convene a child protection review.
- Inform the child's school, educational setting or Elective Home Education Officer

10.4 If the child in in care and missing from residential care

When the situation regarding a missing or absent child warrants the residential provider notifying the police, they should also:

- Inform the Emergency Duty Service if the notification is made 'out of hours'.
- Inform the child's allocated social worker, or the duty social worker for their team, at the earliest opportunity.
- Inform the Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing Children Unit
- The child / young person's education / training placement if they have not returned in time to attend
- The residential carer may notify the child's parent/guardian, if agreed in the care plan or by agreement at the time with the child's social worker, their Practice Manager or the Emergency Duty Service.
- Inform the child's school, educational setting or Elective Home Education Officer

10.5 If the child in is care and missing from a fostering placement or from supportive lodgings

If a carer notifies the police of a missing or absent child, they should expect that the police will try to establish with them whether the child is missing or absent, and will endeavour to agree the immediate level of risk. The carer should also:

- Inform the Emergency Duty Service if the notification is made 'out of hours'.
- Inform the child's allocated social worker, or the duty social worker for their team, at the earliest opportunity.
- Inform the child's school, educational setting or Elective Home Education Officer

The foster carer may notify the child's parent/guardian, if agreed in the care plan or by agreement at the time with the child's social worker, their Advanced Professional or the Emergency Duty Service.

The social worker (or Duty Worker from their team) will advise the following people of a notification to the police:

- The child's parent / other family as appropriate.
- Their Advanced Professional.
- The Independent Reviewing Unit
- The child / young person's education / training setting if they have not returned in time to attend
- The REACH Team (if they are working with the child)

Communications must occur within one working day of the notification to the police. If the notification to the police is made over a weekend or bank holiday, then the Emergency Duty Service will arrange the notification to the child's parent / other family as appropriate.

10.6 Children in Care placed with Independent Providers

This policy must be applied to children / young people placed with independent providers in Devon.

Independent providers should be given a copy of this policy and it is expected that adherence will be part of any placement contract.

Independent Providers outside of the Devon County Council are welcome to share this policy with their local constabulary in order to come to a view as to how the expectations within this policy relate to their own arrangements.

Following the risk assessment, when they are sure the child / young person should be considered absent or missing, the independent provider must notify the local police force.

If a child placed 'out of county' is assessed as a missing person from their placement, Devon and Cornwall Police should always be notified, as there is a significant likelihood that the child or young person will try to return to their home area.

On-going communication between agencies and individuals must be maintained until the child / young person is located.

Informing the Media

11.0 If the child is considered 'absent', any decision to involve the media lies with the parent / guardian and / or the Children's Social Work Services for children in care.

11.1 The police have responsibility for missing children, including those missing from Local Authority care, and, therefore, will judge whether the involvement of the media would assist or hamper their enquiries. The police may make the decision to use the Media immediately depending on the risk grading and necessity. However, decisions to publicise will normally be made after consultation and agreement in writing with Head of Service of Children's Social Work, and taking into account the views of the child's parents or carers. Advice will then be sought from the Communications Team of Devon County Council. Appropriate agencies including schools should be notified in advance of the forthcoming media coverage.

11.2 Where media publicity is required, any statement made between agencies will normally be agreed between press officers. Any decision to publicise through the media or other means will always be made with prior warning to the parent / guardian where possible.

11.3 Parents / Carers have responsibility for advising the media regarding children who are missing from home, however, the police will advise the parents / carers.

The child or young person's return

Safe and Well Check

12.0 There is a responsibility on the police to ensure that the child or young person is safe and well and has an opportunity to disclose any relevant issues. The safe and well check can be conducted by the police or by other professionals (e.g. residential home staff), but the police must be satisfied that all is well.

12.1 A child or young person who has been categorised as 'absent' does not need to be seen by the police (or other professional), but the police and other professionals are required to identify any information indicating that the child has come to harm or may be at on-going risk of harm, and take appropriate action.¹⁵

Return Home Interviews

13.0 The child should be given the opportunity to talk to someone independent about their absence. In some circumstances the person may be a police officer. For many of the children and young people who go missing in Devon, their Return Home Interview will be conducted by the Specialist Youth Workers who are part of the REACH Team. The Youth Workers will complete the Return Home Interview report, which will be undertaken in the context of building trust

¹⁵ *Interim Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons*, 2013, Association of Chief Police Officers and College of Policing, p7

and engaging with the young person.¹⁶ If a child is in care, the social worker will undertake the Return Home Interview. If there are queries regarding where and with whom the young person has been whilst missing, the Youth Worker may undertake the CSE risk assessment¹⁷, and if necessary will arrange for social work input (either via the MASH for new cases, or via the nominated social worker for children and young people who have a named worker).

Actions to be considered at the point of the child's return:

14.0 For Children in Care the Social Worker or Emergency Duty Social Worker should ensure that adequate arrangements are in place to ensure the child / young person is returned safely to their placement / accommodation. If there are any identified difficulties with their return or concern about public order then the police will be asked to assist.

14.1 Where the child / young person is subject to a criminal order and has been arrested the Police must ensure that the child / young person is safely accommodated and this will be done in conjunction with the appropriate adult at the police station. However it is important to note that where the child / young person is in breach of bail they will be detained by the police until the next available court and the worker / carer will need to liaise with the Youth Offending Team (YOT) duty worker regarding their return. It is always the responsibility of Children's Social Worker and YOT to arrange for the child / young person to be accompanied during the Court Hearing and to arrange for them to be transported from the Court to their placement.

14.2 For all children returning from a missing episode, consideration should be given to assessing the child / young person's medical condition and arrange relevant medical attention immediately as required.

When a child / young person returns (including voluntarily or independently of the police) the named worker / carer to inform (as appropriate):

- Police
- Social Worker / Emergency Duty Service
- Parents if they have been informed of child missing
- Staff at the child's school or education setting if they have been informed of child missing
- Any other person informed the child / young person was missing.

14.3 The child's social worker should initiate the completion of form (CS102), to advise of the child's return.

14.4 Talking to the child / young person – it is important for an arrangement to be made for the child to meet one of the specialist youth workers to conduct a return home interview (or for a child in care the social worker should conduct this interview, unless it is more appropriate for an independent person to do so). Contact the REACH team to arrange the interview. Afterwards, it is important to feed back to appropriate colleagues to assist in their work with the child.

¹⁶ *Interim Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons*, 2013, Association of Chief Police Officers and College of Policing, p8

¹⁷ *South West Peninsula Child Sexual Exploitation Standard Operating Protocol*, Joint agreement between Cornwall and Isles of Scilly, Devon, Plymouth and Torbay Safeguarding Boards, p30

14.4 If there are Child Protection concerns, a strategy meeting should be convened to consider whether Section 47 enquiries should be made. This discussion will be initiated by the Social Worker in consultation with their Advanced Professional

14.5 If the missing episode relates to a child in care, at the next review, the child / young person must be given the opportunity if he or she wishes to speak to the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) in private about the reason they went missing and what happened whilst they were away. To enable this to happen, the Social Worker should inform the IRO that child / young person has been missing prior to Review. The child / young person may also wish to speak to their advocate about the reasons they went missing and anything that happened. It is important that anyone involved in talking with the child is fully aware of the risks associated with being missing, and the signs and symptoms of child sexual exploitation.

14.6 The social worker or residential manager should consider whether there are any matters relating to the missing episode for reporting to the regulator: all serious issues relating to Children's Homes must be reported to OFSTED and the Head of Service for Children's Social Work Provision without delay.

14.7 Similarly, all serious issues relating to a child being missing from a foster placement must be reported to the Fostering Operations Manager without delay, and on to the Head of Service. Again consideration should be given to whether the incident requires reporting to OFSTED as per the fostering regulations.

When the child / young person is located, the steps in this policy apply.

Recording

15.0 Throughout the process, residential workers, foster carers, social workers (including the Emergency Duty Service) and school staff must keep a full record of all actions taken and messages received and given. Police will likewise keep a record on the appropriate missing person report.

Data Collection

16.0 The Devon Reducing Exploitation and Absence from Care or Home Team (REACH) will establish a data collection system in collaboration with the police (unit to launch August 2013). This information will feed into the Devon Child Exploitation and Missing Children Forum and the locality groups, to combine with local intelligence to form a picture of risk in relation to individual children, potential perpetrators and risky addresses.

Reporting

17.0 The Devon Child Exploitation and Missing Children Forum will report to the Peninsula Steering Group, which in turn reports to the four contributory Local Children's Safeguarding Boards. In addition, Devon County Council will arrange for regular reports to go to elected members (via the Corporate Parenting Forum) on patterns of children going missing from local authority care.

Legal Context and Guidance

Children Act 1989, Section 20 and Section 50.

Children Act 2004, Section 11.

Arrangements for Placement of Children (General) Regulations 1991.

Children's Homes Regulation 1999.

Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons (ACPO 2010)

Interim Guidance on the Management, recording and Investigation of Missing Persons 2013 (*Not yet adopted by Devon and Cornwall Constabulary, as at May 2013*)

National Minimum Standards for Fostering 2011

National Minimum Standards for Children's Homes 2011

South West Peninsula Child Exploitation Standard Operating Protocol, 2013

Children Missing Education, Procedures and Protocol, Babcock and Devon County Council, May 2013

Admissions Code of Practice 2012

Eliminating Exclusions Protocol 2009

SEN Code of Practice 2001

Further reading:

Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, HM Government, March 2013

Missing Children, OFSTED, February 2013

Missing Children and Adults: A Cross Government Strategy, Home Office, 2011

Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons, Second Edition, National Policing Improvement Agency, 2010

Statutory guidance on children who run away and go missing from home or care, Department for children, schools and families, July 2009

Running away – Young People's Views on running away from care, Children's Rights Director for England, OFSTED, 2012

Running Away, Office of the Children's Rights Director, May 2006

Still Running II, Children's Society, 2005

Children Missing from Care and Home – Good Practice Guidance Local Authority Circular (LAC2002)17

Young Runaways Action Plan (DCSF) 2008

<https://www.missingpeople.org.uk/>