

Family Services

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1. Introduction

Missing young people are often missing due to a variety of underlying factors. In recent years, well publicised cases have highlighted the multiple risks and vulnerabilities facing children who go missing, including; the risk of child sexual and criminal exploitation, drug and alcohol use and becoming involved in perpetrating, or a being a victim of crime.

In Barnet, there has been a reduction of young people going missing from both home and care. During 2019-2020 there was a total of 1003 missing episodes involving total of 183 young people. 99 young people accounted for 808 missing episodes from care, whilst 83 young people accounted for 195 missing from home episodes.

In congruence to previous years, boys still account for significantly more episodes in comparison to girls, with 65% of boys being reported missing from home and 51% reported as missing from care. It should be noted that this is an increase compared to previous years. In terms of ethnicity there is significant disproportionality of missing young from Black and Other racially minoritised backgrounds in comparison to the ethnicity breakdown of Barnet's children population 121 or 66% of young people who were missing come from Black and Other racially minoritised backgrounds in comparison to 62 or 44% young people from White backgrounds, again this is an increase in comparison to previous years.

In order to respond effectively to children and young people who go missing from home and care, it is important that professionals working with them are mindful of the risks they face and make tenacious efforts to protect their welfare by making robust enquiries to locate them. To reduce the risk of further missing episodes, practitioners must understand the 'push and pull' and contextual factors that influence the actions of children who go missing, develop relationships of trust with them and build their resilience through child centered assessment, planning and intervention activities.

This protocol sets out the London Borough of Barnet's missing children procedure and provides practice guidance to practitioners and managers for children and young people under the age of 18 (up to 25 for children with disabilities/SEN and Care Leavers) aimed at promoting effective arrangements to safeguard children and young people who go missing from home or care (including residential care).

2. Our Principles

Barnet's Children and Young People's Plan 2019 – 2023 sets out the strategic vision to be a 'Family Friendly' borough by 2023. The aspiration is for children and families to be:

- Safe & Secure – Children and young people are safe and protected from harm
- Family & Belonging – Families and children can be together and part of a community that encourages resilience
- Health & Wellbeing – Children are supported to achieve a healthy start in life, enjoy a healthy lifestyle and to build resilience

- Education & Learning – Children and young people can learn about the world around them | Culture – Our attitudes and behaviours enhance the way we work with children and young people
- Cooperation & Leadership – We include children and young people in decision making | Communication – Information is shared effectively to children, young people and families across the borough.

Whilst this protocol does not specifically cover Children Missing from Education it is informed by good practice guidance on this area. The guidance in this document should not be read in isolation. Additional policy and guidance in relation to children who go missing should be read alongside relevant guidance and procedures for children who are at risk of:

- Exploitation (Vulnerable Adolescents Strategy)
- Domestic Abuse and Violence (DA & VAWG Strategy)
- Deliberate Self-Harm
- Group Offending; Substance Misuse/Dealing and Gang-involved young people (Youth Justice Plan)
- Marginalisation due to race, ability, religious beliefs and sexuality

3. Related Guidance

Statutory Guidance on Children who Run Away or Go Missing from Home or Care 2014

London Child Protection Procedures: Children Missing from Care, Home and Education

Safeguarding Children who may have been trafficked 2011.

Family Services Procedures Manual - Barnet Safeguarding Vulnerable Adolescents Protocol and tool kit

4. Strategic Leadership

This protocol has been developed by Barnet Family Services in partnership with the Police, Education, 0-19 Early Help Services and Youth Offending Services (YOT) on behalf of Barnet's Safeguarding Children

Partnership (BSCP) in accordance with national guidance and to encourage agencies and practitioners work together to prevent children and young people going missing, support their safe return and ensure the risks they face are robustly managed.

The strategic responsibility for children missing from home and care is held by the Strategic Lead for Vulnerable Adolescents and Partnership Engagement. Through quality assurance activities and data, regular reports on missing children are provided to the Lead Member for Children's Services, the Chief Executive, Barnet Safeguarding Children Partnership and Executive Director for Children's Services.

5. Philomena Protocol – (Care Homes and Foster Carers)

The Police the Philomena Protocol 2020, introduced new requirements for care homes and foster carers to consider when caring for a looked after young person whom is at risk of regularly going missing.

With support of the supervising, and young person allocated social worker, the following should be in place and the care home manager must ensure that they are accessible to all staff day and night:

- **The Care Plan** – should include strategies to avoid the child going missing. It should also include strategies to reduce the duration and risks associated if the child does go missing.
- **The Placement Plan** – should include strategies for preventing the child from taking going missing;
- **Looked After Child information Sharing Form (Grab Pack)** – should be accurately maintained for all children where there is concern that they may go missing. The Grab pack contains information such as
 - Description of the child and recent photograph
 - Relevant addresses, known associates and addresses frequented.
 - Name and address of child's School, GP and Dentist.
 - Previous history of absenteeism / missing and circumstances of where found.
 - Circumstances under which the child is absent.
 - Any factors that increase the risk to the child.
 - Childs Oyster card / Travel card details
 - Childs Telephone number / email /social media

The Police are the lead agency for missing children and they are ultimately responsible for investigative work regarding locating missing young people; however, there is an expectation that both staff from care homes, parents carers take reasonable steps to locate the young person.

5.1. Requirements before reporting the child young person missing

It is expected that parents and carers and care home staff will take all reasonable and practicable steps to locate a child missing from home and inform the police without delay. If a child is discovered to be missing and their parent/carer has not reported this to the police, they should be strongly encouraged to do immediately.

For Children in Care the primary carer should report the child missing to the Police by calling 101 or using the online reporting link: [Report a missing person | Metropolitan Police](#), and advise the local authority of the CAD number and circumstances leading up to the child going missing.

It is outlined by the Philomena Protocol 2020 that the following steps should be taken by any care home foster carer, before contacting the Police to report the young person as missing:

- Attempt to contact the young person (repeat)
- Contact all known family members
- Contact all known friends and other relevant persons
- Contact local hospitals
- Check any known Social Media
- Search home and immediate outdoor areas wherever possible
- Check locations known to be frequented
- Oyster Card (it can be viewed online or by a social worker with access)
- Talk to other young people in the home
- Inform child’s social worker
- Ensure social services risk assessment for the child available and viewed

6. Definitions

<p>Missing A child or young person will be defined as missing if their whereabouts are unknown and there are reasons to believe one or more of the following:</p>	<p>There are suspicious circumstances, i.e. the person may have been the victim of a serious crime the behavior is out of character and there is no apparent explanation for their absence</p> <p>There is significant concern that the young person may have suffered harm</p> <p>The young person is thought to be at risk of significant harm during the absence</p> <p>Or</p> <p>The young person is dangerous and there is a significant risk they will harm another person whilst absent.</p>
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As of June 2020 the category of “absent” ceased to exist instead the Police will undertake a risk assessment each missing young person which will then help guide what proportionate investigative work is required to locate the children/young person.

Risk Level	Factors that are considered
Low	The risk of harm to the subject or the public is assessed as possible but minimal
Medium	The risk of harm to the subject or the public is assessed as likely but not serious.
High	The risk of serious harm to the subject or the public is assessed as very likely.

- All children under the age of 18 years must be classified as at least Medium risk

7. Practice Guidance

Appendix A details the process for Missing Children Allocated to Children's Social Care

Appendix B details the process for Missing Children NOT Allocated to Children's Social Care

7.1. Working with the Police

The Police as the lead agency for the investigation of missing children will conduct investigations into all children reported as missing. The local authority and other agencies are under a duty to cooperate with any investigation for a child at risk of harm.

7.2. Response from the Police

The police risk classification of a missing young person is based on continuous monitoring and risk assessment in line with current guidance. It is therefore essential that if any updating information becomes known that indicates a change of risk to the young person this is conveyed immediately to the Police. This means that the Police can continually review the response and allocated resources required to locate the young person.

When receiving a missing person report in relation to Children in Care, the Police will tailor their response to the circumstances and the risk assessment of the child. Children living out of borough will be reported as missing to the police force in the locality of the placement.

7.3. Exceptional missing episodes or high-risk groups.

In addition to high-risk groups some children may be regarded as at exceptional risk when missing. These children include those who are very young, vulnerable because of a disability or mental ill health, they are regarded as an immediate risk to self or others or where the missing episode is lengthy including where there is no proof of life.

In these cases, the following is important:

- That the missing episode is correctly categorised by the police at the outset in terms of risk level including consideration of the episode as a crime incident
- That all relevant information is shared with police to ensure they can assess the risk accurately including the child's involvement in criminal or gang activity or links to any associates of concern
- That efforts to locate the child are immediately proactive so that intelligence and telecommunications methods can be considered/utilized before time elapses and these become less effective
- If there is disagreement regarding the risk level selected by police/investigative approach this should be escalated immediately – see appendix C BSCB multi agency escalation police
- That regular contact is maintained with the family/parents of the missing child to seek and share information with them regarding locating the child- this may involve unannounced visits to the family by a social worker as well as planned liaison and support
- The use of media campaigns and publicity should be kept under review
- That the missing episode is managed via a tight multi agency plan with clear timescales which is regularly and pro-actively kept under review. Multi agency meetings should take place a minimum of monthly for long term missing children but this may be more frequent and actions should be tracked in between meetings. Initial strategy meeting may need to be chaired at a senior level eg Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance or Assistant Director level.
- That these missing episodes have oversight at the right level of seniority within each agency
- Minutes of meetings and actions must be circulated to the line manager and senior officers in each agency for review, oversight and tracking
- That any drift and delay in the plan, lack of engagement by a key agency or where the child is not located involve multi agency challenge where necessary and rapid escalation to senior officers- see appendix C, BSCP multi-agency escalation police

7.4. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children represent a particularly vulnerable group of young people who through their lived experiences, may present with significant issues of trauma. The journey of asylum seeking children is often unknown and many reports highlight the conditions of travel are particularly traumatic with some young people being subject to human trafficking.

Although the young person may be accommodated into care; the lack of familial support networks, language barriers, being separated from family members and debt bondage through travel are significant risks that must be considered. There are increasingly case examples in which young people are being coerced, controlled and exploited into domestic/commercial slavery and sex work. Therefore, at the point of accommodation a referral to the National Referral Mechanism must always be considered.

If an unaccompanied asylum seeking child goes missing a referral to the National Referral Mechanism must be completed.

8. Roles of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) & Missing Coordinator

All missing child notifications will be screened and processed by the MASH. The following actions will be undertaken by the MASH and partner agencies:

The Police Public Protection Desk will notify the MASH as soon as a MERLIN is received;

- The MASH **will prioritise all Missing notifications** and screen to determine if known to CSC, Education, YOT or 0-19 Early Help Service, create a missing episode in LCS and notify the Missing Coordinator;
- If a child is not currently open to social care or known, a contact will be created and the partnership in MASH will gather information for a safeguarding risk assessment;
- The MASH Manager will assess the information gathered from partners to inform the risk assessment during a missing episode and on return home and to determine next steps;
- The Missing Coordinator will track the episode, timescales and liaise with the police if the child is currently or previously known to CSC and will signpost, where relevant, to the lead professional/allocated Social Worker
- The Missing Coordinator will track all missing young people and refer them for a Return Home Interview once located.

9. Return Home Interviews

Statutory guidance requires that Return Home Interviews are offered to all young people who go missing. Return Home Interviews should take place **within 72 hours** of the child or young person returning or being found.

If the young person is regularly missing (more than 3 times per week) one RHI interview can be offered weekly to encapsulate that week of missing episodes. This will need to be agreed across the agencies within the context of a CEAM strategy meeting.

In Barnet the Return Home Interview (RHI) process is undertaken by 0-19 Early Help Service, if the child is living in Barnet either at home or through the auspices of being looked after. If the young person is living in care outside of Barnet then locally commissioned arrangements are in place with St. Christopher's Fellowship who will undertake the Return home interview. The Missing coordinator will be responsible for supporting social workers and ensuring that referrals for return home interviews are made to either 0-19 Early Help Service or St Christopher's Fellowship.

9.1. Planning for When a Child is Located and their Return (RHIs)



If a child is 'missing' the Police and parents, Social Worker, Residential Unit Staff/Foster Carer and Police should commence contingency planning for when the child is located. Plans should include:

- Will the child return to the placement/home address or are they safe in the location where they are found?
- If the child is to return, how will s/he be conveyed to their placement/home address?
- Do the Police wish to interview the child where they are located or after they have returned to their placement/home address?
- Confirming who will talk to the child when s/he is located / returned
- Normally the Residential Unit Staff/Foster Carer or Social Worker/Emergency Duty Team (out of hours) will make arrangements for the transportation of a child to his/her placement/home address.

9.2. Purpose of the Return Home Interview

The purpose of the Return Home Interview is to:

- Identify and deal with any harm the child has incurred (his/her medical condition should be discussed immediately and any need for medical attention assessed);
- Understand and address the reasons the child ran away (the child's living arrangements/placement might need to be reviewed, an Early Help assessment may need to be completed);
- Establish where the child/young person was during the missing period;
- Identify any concerns that exist regarding the activity or treatment of the child or young person whilst missing such as criminal and/or sexual exploitation, Offending, Drugs...;
- Establish what may need to change to reduce the likelihood of further episodes – Push and Pull factors;
- Determine and plan for potential support to meet the needs of the young person;
- Understand the level of risk of the Child or Young Person repeating the runaway;
- Confirmation that the child has been given information about how they can access further or on-going support services;
- Obtain parents/carers view of the incident;
- Seek to establish the views of what the child wants to happen now – short term/long term;
- Discussion with the child about whether they are happy where they are living, or are they worried/upset about anything? Are they afraid of anybody?
- Build a picture of the child's normal Friendship Groups and Patterns (including reference to gangs)

9.3. Information from Return Home Interviews

Completed copies of Return Home Interviews will be loaded onto the child's file by the Missing Coordinator and will be shared with the investigating officer of the missing episode, Team Manager, allocated Social Worker (for children or Young People on a plan), YOT and 0-19 Early Help Services. The allocated social worker and their respective team manager are responsible for reviewing and to incorporate any findings on changing risks into the Child's Plan. The RHI can also be used to assist in building a comprehensive picture of the child, the reasons for going missing, the risks they may be exposed to and how their parents or carers can support a reduction in risk of future missing episodes. The RHI can inform future risk assessments and care planning, the RHI can also assist in finding the child should they go missing again.

If a child chooses not to engage with a return interview the 0-19 Early Help Services, or St Christopher's Fellowship will record the reasons for this and share this with the local authority nominated manager. Sometimes it is not possible to contact a child directly and / or parents may refuse for a return interview to be conducted. Should this be the case, this information will also be reviewed by the nominated manager.

The RHI will support an evaluation by the MASH Team Manager of whether the child is likely to continue to go missing or may require a statutory assessment and/or intervention from Children's Social Care Services or requires an early help response.

For young people who are frequently missing, it is agreed locally that return home interviews will also be shared with the Police, to assist with investigations and to support planning to reduce the frequency and duration of missing episodes.

10. Risk Assessment

A Risk Assessment should be completed immediately on every occasion a child is 'missing'.

The **Risks section in the Missing Workspace on LCS** must be completed and or updated every time a child is reported missing and/or located. The Risk Assessment should be used to inform care planning/risk management arrangements and remain under review for escalation as necessary. The Risk Assessment may include input from others involved in supporting the child such as the family, Social Worker, 0-19 Early Help Service, CAMHS/BICS, Education Welfare, Health, YOT or School.

The Child/Young Person's Plan should outline any individual vulnerability and risk factors that could increase the chances of the child going missing as well as information to help manage any missing episodes and finding the child. All care plans and risk assessments should be **regularly reviewed**, updated and recorded to include the following information:

- The degree and nature of risk and vulnerability if the child goes missing;
- The views of the child and those with parental responsibility on action to be taken if the child goes missing;
- The level of supervision/support that services or care staff will provide for the child;
- How parents/carers will be informed and communicated with if their child goes missing;
- Consideration of any external influences that may result in a child's removal without consent;
- The likelihood of the child being harbored, any previous episodes, locations frequented by the child and trigger Incidents;
- Agreed interventions;
- Placement stability – their feelings about the separation from their families, carers or friends or about the placement they are in, or the restrictions placed on them;

- Going missing as a coping strategy when difficulties arise;
- Influences both within and outside the placement; and
- A desire to return to their families/carers or spend time with their friends.

10.1. Child Exploitation and Missing (CEAM) Strategy Meetings

Whilst the majority of children who go missing return within reasonable timescales and do not go missing regularly, there are a minority of children for whom missing episodes of concern. This may be because they have gone missing for an extended period, they have gone missing on a number of occasions or there are particular risks associated with their periods missing from home (e.g. risk of sexual and criminal exploitation; substance use, deliberate self-harm, etc).

The social worker must arrange an early missing person CEAM Strategy Meeting within 72 hours when there are particular concerns for the child's welfare, for example a young person who runs away persistently, leaves their placement to meet with unfamiliar or inappropriate adults or is vulnerable to exploitation. These meetings are particularly important to analysis the vulnerability and push pull factors of the young person to ensure the child is safeguarded in a model of early intervention and prevention.

If a child goes missing repeatedly, consideration must be given to the 'push and pull factors' and the actions required. **Continual multi-agency Strategy Meetings should be held at a minimum of six weekly intervals to monitor and respond to missing episodes until there is confidence that the issue has been resolved.**

CEAM Strategy discussions should also consider:

- The need to initiate a missing child health alert which will notify all local health providers of the missing child and any particular vulnerabilities. This will be particularly important if the child/young person has identified health needs such as a mental health condition, substance misuse or a health condition. The Named Professionals within all NHS provider organisations can initiate these alerts;
- Alerting the National missing persons desk (parental consent required where child is not in Care);
- National Referral Mechanism where the child is missing and subject to risks of criminal/sexual exploitation, trafficking or modern slavery;
- Agreements on communication between agencies and with the parents / carers;
- Action required and agreed to locate the child;
- Updates to the Risk Assessment; and
- Agreements in relation to a Media Strategy.

10.2. Children in Care (CiC) and Children subject to a Child Protection Plan or referred to MACE (Multi Agency Child Exploitation panel)

There is a statutory requirement for each Local Authority to record all CiC missing episodes exceeding 24 hours.

Children who have a Child Protection Plan or who are subject to a Section 47 enquiry will require additional action.

Specific actions for missing Children in Care and Children Subject to a Child Protection Plan include:

- Informing the Local Authority Head of Safeguarding or equivalent and the local Public Health Designated Nurse;
- Ensuring that a CEAM Strategy Meeting is arranged on the first available working day; in any event a strategy meeting should be arranged within 72 hours if the child is still missing. Dependent on the level of assessed risk, it may be necessary to convene an immediate strategy meeting following the notification of a missing child;
- Representatives from the relevant agencies should attend the strategy meeting as well as other practitioners involved with the child;
- Children's Services via the MASH should also implement the London Notification of Missing Children/Person Procedure;
- Where it is deemed appropriate, the child's parents/carers should be informed of the missing episode ;
- The Executive Director of Children's Services **must** also receive notification of all children who are missing for more than 72 hours.

10.3. Children in Care & Care Leavers

As our local data shows Children in Care, particularly 16/17 year olds are over represented in the groups of children that go missing, given their often adverse experiences they can be particularly vulnerable to harm and exploitation, we must ensure that our approach in working with them is robust to protect them

10.4. Initial Missing Risk Assessment

Placement planning for every child who is at risk of entering into care or who is already a Child in Care must include consideration of the risks and vulnerabilities associated to missing and reach an agreement with all those involved in the child's care, as to how the placement will respond to missing and 'away from placement without authorisation' incidences.

The child's social worker is responsible for ensuring that an initial assessment of risk is completed when a young person is accommodated or changes placement. This should include an assessment of the level of risk within the geographical area in which the young person is to be placed, particularly where the placement is outside of the local authority area.

Before a child is placed in an out of authority placement, the social worker for the responsible authority should liaise with the residential / foster care agency and the host local authority and agree to the actions required to

be taken if a child is reported as absent, missing or away from placement without authorisation from by their provider.

It is recognised that in emergency or unplanned placements, the Placement Plan, including the initial assessment of risk, is unlikely to have been completed, prior to the child being placed. Prior risk assessments and Missing Action Plans should be shared with the new placement, and where appropriate with the host local authority, if there are grounds to suspect that the young person is likely to go missing from their new placement, a multi-agency preventative strategy discussion or meeting should be held to reduce and manage the risks.

The initial risk assessment and any action plans should be reviewed as part of the Looked After reviewing processes and following any missing episode.

The Agency should contact the child's Social Worker or the responsible authority's Out of Hours Service as soon as it is confirmed that a child is missing from the placement.

If a child in care has been missing for 72 hours or on 3 or more occasions, the child's Plan should be updated to outline how practitioners will support the child/young person and ensure that they are safeguarded from harm

10.5. Photographs

Two recent photographs of the child (face and full body length) should be retained by the carer for missing from care purposes. All LCS records must include copies of these photographs. Social Workers and Barnet Children's Home staff are responsible for regularly updating.

A meeting will be convened by Children's Social Care Services, chaired by the child's Independent Reviewing Officer, Child Protection Coordinator, Team Manager or equivalent, and attended by all relevant agencies. Parents/careers with parental responsibility should be informed of the steps the local authority is taking to locate the child and be kept informed of progress.

Children's Social Care Director must be notified of all Children in Care who have been missing for more than 24-hours. If the child has not been located within 72-hours the Executive Director of Children's Services, the Lead Member and the appropriate divisional Chief Inspector must also be notified.

If the child has been missing for over **28 days** the Borough Commander or their representative should meet with senior managers from relevant agencies to review the Plan and agree actions to locate the child.

If another multi-agency meeting has already been arranged i.e. Child Protection Conference or Care Planning Meeting you may consider the possibility of utilising that meeting to address the missing concerns and formulate a Missing Strategy rather than hold a separate meeting.

Where relevant, the child's Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) must be informed of all instances of a child being missing, absent or away from placement without authorisation. The child's Care Plan should reflect details of arrangements required to keep the child safe and minimise the future risk of the child going missing or being absent from their placement.

If the child's whereabouts are known or suspected, parent/carers/residential staff in conjunction with the Social Worker should decide whether to allow the child to temporarily remain in that location, or to arrange for their return. These children should **NOT** be classified as missing nor reported to the Police. The responsibility for returning these children remains with Children Services, but the Police can assist with this return if there is reason to believe there will be criminal or public order issues.

The facility to refer missing episodes to MASH for additional safeguarding checks will be available in each borough.

The child's Independent Reviewing Officer must be kept fully informed of any incidences of a child missing, absent or away from placement without authorisation.

10.6. Review of Child in Care Plan – All About Me

When a Child in Care who has been missing has been located, the child's social worker and their line manager should decide in consultation with the child's Independent Reviewing Officer, carers and the child whether they should convene an early statutory review of the child's Care Plan.

The statutory review will provide an opportunity to check that the Care Plan has been appropriately amended to address the reasons for the child's missing episodes and include an intervention strategy to prevent reoccurrences.

The Child's Independent Reviewing Officer should also review the suitability of the placement in conjunction with the child, and his / her family, the placement provider and the child's social worker.

10.7. Media

The Police have responsibility for considering whether to inform the media regarding missing Looked after Children to assist in locating the individual. However decisions to publicise a missing Children in Care will only be taken after discussions have taken place between the Police and Director of Children's Social Care to agree a media strategy. The Social Worker, whenever possible, should also ensure that those with parental responsibility are informed of the media presentation.

Where agreement over publicity cannot be reached between the Police and Local Authority, the ultimate decision on publicity is that of the Police. However, the Police must have reasons to publicise against the wishes of the Local Authority and these reasons must be recorded.

Unless it is absolutely necessary, the child will not be identified as a Child in Care.

10.8. Intervention Plans/Strategies - Prevention and Planning

Missing interventions seek to reduce the risks that a child may be exposed to and prevent the likelihood of further incidents of the child being absent / missing or away from placement without authorisation

10.9. Managing repeat missing episodes

Common strategies to manage repeat missing episodes include:

- Information and intelligence gathering to understand the possible locations peers or adults that the young person may be associating with.
- Disrupting the child's contact with adults suspected of being involved in grooming, abuse, coercion, trafficking, violence, use and supply of illegal substances, illegal activities and sexual exploitation;
- Disrupting the child's relationship with other young people who will also be victims, but suspected of being coerced or threatened into introducing children to adults involved in grooming, abuse, coercion, trafficking, violence, use and supply of illegal substances, illegal activities and child exploitation;
- Gathering evidence to prosecute adults suspected of being involved in grooming, abuse, coercion, trafficking, violence, use and supply of illegal substances, illegal activities and child exploitation;
- Listening and taking account of the child's wishes and feelings;
- Promoting positive relationships with family, friends and carers;
- Identifying ways of physically protecting the child;
- Ensuring contact is maintained with a child whilst missing or absent;
- Setting clear boundaries and developing contracts regarding expectations and responsibilities;
- Motivating positive behaviour;
- Empowering the carer/ foster carer;
- Building the child's self-esteem, self-confidence and self-worth through the provision of positive activities;
- Raising awareness of the risks associated with running away or being missing;
- Meeting any physical, emotional, mental health needs the child might have;
- Working with the carers or parents to make the child's home a place where they want to be;
- Working with education & training providers to meet the child's needs; and
- Providing specialist support through to multi-agency partnerships

11. High Risk Groups, Specific Details

11.1. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

When UASC are reported missing, they will retain their status as Children in Care unless one or more of the criteria are met.

- They return to a birth parent/someone with parental responsibility
- They are located in another country
- The case is taken over by another local authority
- They are age assessed as being over 18yrs.

No UASC under 16yrs who is missing should have their Child in Care status removed.

There are many additional factors to consider when UASC children are reported missing and further practice guidance should be sought to ensure there is a coordinated approach to full information sharing with the Police and Home Office who will hold a current photograph and fingerprint record of the child.

The risk assessment should seek to establish:

- Relevant details about the child's background and journey to the UK.
- An understanding of the grounds for Asylum
- An analysis of the child's vulnerability
- Adults who may be connected to the young person
- The likelihood of the child going missing.
- Consider putting the young person in a safe place.
- The appropriateness of information being divulged as to the whereabouts of the young person.

When concerns of significant harm are identified i.e. in cases of possible trafficking or sexual exploitation, a strategy meeting should be held which should consider what preventative measures can be put in place to safeguard the child/ young person.

Child in Care reviews should be held as required by statutory guidance until the young person is deemed to be no longer in care.

For young people aged 16 and 17yrs who go missing a CiC review chaired by their Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) should be held to determine whether they remain looked after or whether it is appropriate to have their legal status changed to former Relevant.

If a young person has not been found by their 18th birthday then a formal Missing children meeting should be held to determine the next steps.

The missing children meeting should incorporate information from the Police, Home Office and other agencies where appropriate. The case should only be closed if there are no ongoing concerns about the vulnerability of the young person being expressed.

Any decision to close the case should be on the proviso that it is reopened if the young person is located and found to be in need of services as an eligible, relevant or former relevant child.

Additional practice guidance on safeguarding UASC can be found in government guidance [Safeguarding Children who may have been trafficked 2011](#).

11.2. Trafficked Children

Trafficked children are at high risk of going missing, with most who go missing doing so within one week of entering into care and many within 48 hours. Unaccompanied migrant or asylum seeking children, who go missing immediately after entering into care should be considered children who may be victims of trafficking.

11.3. Homeless 16/17 year olds

When a 16 or 17 year old runs away or goes missing they are no less vulnerable than younger children and are equally at risk, particularly of child exploitation and involvement with offending.

11.4. Protecting children at risk of radicalisation

Going missing is a risk factor in relation to radicalisation; a child may go missing because they have already been radicalised. A child's risk of being radicalised might increase because they are missing and are spending time with people who may seek to involve them in radical/extreme activities. The risk is heightened whilst they are missing, because the protective factors of family or care are not available to them.

11.5. Children at risk of sexual exploitation and domestic abuse

Going missing is a significant risk factor in relation to sexual exploitation; a child may go missing because they are being sexually exploited, coerced or threatened. A child's risk of being sexually exploited might increase because they are missing and are spending time with people who will harm them. The risk is heightened whilst they are missing because the protective factors of family or care are not available to them. Because there is such a strong link between children going missing and risk of sexual exploitation, professionals should always assess whether a child who has gone missing is being sexually exploited or at risk of being sexually exploited. This may also include domestic abuse in 'relationships' with abuser 'boyfriends' who are act in ways to control, coerce, threaten, emotionally, physically and sexually abuse their victims

11.6. Children at risk of criminal exploitation and offending

Children and young people who go missing from care, home and education also need safeguarding against the risk of criminal exploitation and offending. Children are playing a significant role and are victims in what is colloquially known as the 'county lines' issue. The 'county lines' issue involves London gangs running drug sales using children as carriers into the Home Counties and beyond.

In all situations where there are concerns, a referral to the National Referral Mechanism, and rescue and respond must be made

11.7. Hidden Missing

Research demonstrates that children from Black and Other racially minoritised groups, and children that go missing from education are less likely to be reported as missing. Local authorities and the police should be proactive in places where they believe under reporting may be more likely because of the relationships some communities, or individuals, have with the statutory sector.

11.8. Unaccounted for children

Social Worker's must remain curious about the whereabouts of all children in families receiving statutory services and vigilant in undertaking checks to track and trace all unaccounted for children and to report them as missing if they are unable to be located.

11.9. Supporting Agencies

Missing Person's Bureau	The Bureau sits within the National Crime Agency and is a national and international point of contact for all missing persons. The bureau acts as a hub information exchange and hosts a national database of missing and unidentified records.
Missing People	Missing People is a registered charity and was formerly known as the National Missing Persons Helpline. They provide support and advice for families via a national 24 hour free phone helpline 0500 700 700 for people who are missing someone.
Missing Kids	The UK Missing Kids Website is at http://uk.missingkids.com and helps the police to find missing and abducted children. The website enables the police to transmit photographs and information about a missing child to other forces around the UK and abroad.
Stop the Traffik	A global charity which aims to build resilient communities and to prevent human trafficking.

12. Appendix A: Barnet Safeguarding Children Board Escalation policy



<https://www.barnet.gov.uk/bscb-home/key-documents/board-multi-agency-policies-and-guides.html>



**BSCB Escalation
Procedure Nov 14.pd**