

Joint Protocol

for reporting

Missing Young People



West Mercia Police
Worcestershire County Council, Children Services
Herefordshire Council, Children and Young Peoples Services
Telford & Wrekin Council, Children and Families Services
Shropshire Council, Children and Young Peoples Services

Publication Date: September 2009

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Review Date: September 2011

Target Audience: Police, Children Services, all staff in residential children's homes, foster carers, schools and Health Departments.

Published by:

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Introduction

1.1 The Children's Society '*Still Running*' surveys produced estimates that around 100,000 young people under the age of 16 run away from home or care each year across the UK. We know that many of these young people stay with friends or family members, but there are some who do not have or don't access these support systems, or who are forced to stay in environments that are harmful to their safety and well-being, and so end up engaging in activities that may put them at risk (Statutory Guidance on children who run away or go missing from care or home 2009)

In response to these concerns about the number of young people who run away each year, the Home Office and Department for Children, Schools and Families jointly issued the Young Runaways action Plan in 2008. This Action Plan sets out a strategy for local agencies to coordinate and respond to the need for more effective monitoring and support for this vulnerable group of young people.

Over 6,000 missing person reports are made every year in the Counties of Shropshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Approximately 3,400 of these cases end up being formally investigated by the police.

1.2 In 2008/2009 the precise figure of missing reports formally investigated by the West Mercia Police amounted to 3306. These 3306 reports refer to 1,810 people. However this does not mean that a person goes missing on average only twice. Most people actually go missing only once. There remains a hard-core of persons who go missing on numerous occasions. The remainder tend to involve people who return home of their own accord or who are quickly traced by officers prior to the commencement of a formal or protracted investigation.

1.3 In 2008/9, the 3306 missing investigations undertaken in the Force area included 2304 reports (over 69%) of people under the age of 18 years.

984 individuals were responsible for the 2304 reports.

213 young people under the age of 18 went missing three or more times. One child went missing 51 times alone.

1.4 Many of these cases involve children in care; particularly those residents in children's care homes operated primarily by private care providers or occasionally by the three local authorities. In the West Mercia Police Area last year, this amounted to 1196 missing reports emanating from such Care placements. These 1196 missing reports only related to 302 children! This means that each child goes missing (on average) close to four times a year.

1.5 Investigations regarding Missing Persons are conservatively costed at £1,000 per investigation (2004). However many such investigations cost many times more, e.g. the Force Helicopter costs £400 per hour in fuel alone. It is therefore easy to appreciate the great amount that missing person enquiries cost the Force.

1.6 It is therefore vitally important that, if a particular child or young persons missing episodes are high, you flag this issue up with the Detective Inspector on your

Divisional Public Protection Unit. This work forms part of the West Mercia Area Misper Reduction Strategy, which again feeds into the Murder Reduction Strategy. By playing your part, you may well avert an avoidable tragedy.

1.7 It is also important to note that the majority of looked-after children do not experience missing episodes. Moreover, most children in residential care do NOT go missing.

1.8 Academic research together with local analysis by the Force Missing Persons Champion(s) and local authority staff show that children who run away are **often very vulnerable**. While each case needs to be considered on its merits, young runaways generally are at a heightened risk of being victims of crime, sexually exploited, involved in substance misuse or of becoming involved in crime and disorder. Additionally, research shows that the level of risk to the individual child actually goes up on each occasion that they go missing – contrary to the misconception that the risk goes down. Therefore the concept of children being ‘street-wise’, and therefore at a consequent lesser risk, must be abandoned forthwith - as quite the reverse is the reality.

1.9 Since the first version of this protocol was introduced in 2003, the constituent Local Authorities within the West Mercia Police Authority area and West Mercia Police have worked hard to address the problem. Using partnership, problem solving and performance management the incidents of ‘repeat’ runaway behaviour reduced by 14.5%.

1.10 In addition to reducing the figures (through reduced calls for police assistance, reduced deployments and reduced investigations) this way of working has also helped to safeguard some of our most vulnerable children.

1.11 However, the issue of young runaways remains a significant problem. This issue requires our very best attention if we are to protect our children from ruthlessly efficient predatory influences that exist within society and to avoid the children themselves becoming socially excluded.

2. Legislation

2.1 The legal parameters within which missing person enquiries are conducted can be found in the common law, and international law and especially the provisions of the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR). Some of the provisions of the ECHR have been given legal effect within the United Kingdom by virtue of the Human Rights Act 1998.

2.2 Data Protection legislation places certain conditions on the 'processing' of information classed as personal data. Data held for policing purposes should only be disclosed for such purposes. Adherence to this Agreement will therefore ensure compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and West Mercia Police's Data Protection policies. Data Protection legislation does NOT prevent the police and local authority working together to ensure the safe return of a missing young person. Both organisations are registered for the purpose of protecting people and therefore for disclosing information for that purpose.

2.3 In July 2009 the Department for Children School and Families published statutory guidance on children who run away and go missing from home or Care supporting local authorities to meet the requirements of National Indicator 71.

This document is issued under Section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 which means that, except in exceptional circumstances, local authorities must act in accordance with this guidance.

3. Scope

3.1 The terms child and children refer to any young person under the age of 18.

3.2 Section A of the protocol is designed for: -

- All children and young people under 18 who go missing from the parental home/
- Children looked after by the constituent Local Authorities placed in Local Authority Children's homes within the West Mercia Police Authority area boundaries.
- Children looked after by ANY Local Authority placed with foster carers within the county boundaries.
- Children looked after by ANY Local Authority and placed in private establishments or with agency foster carers within the West Mercia Police Authority boundaries, where compliance with the protocol is specified in the contract or placement agreement.

3.3 In addition the protocol will apply to all young people placed within the West Mercia Police Authority area boundaries (including those aged over 18) for whom the constituent Local Authorities have continuing responsibilities under The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

3.4 For this point forward in this document, the Local Authorities serving the serving the West Mercia Police area namely:

- Worcestershire County Council.
- Herefordshire Council
- Shropshire Council
- Telford & Wrekin Council

will be termed "Children Services."

3.5 Definitions.

The following definitions apply to this procedure and relate to children and young people under 18 years old who go or have gone missing. The definition of running away is taken from the DCFS Statutory Guidance report 2008 and includes reference to young people who self-define running away as being forced to leave because, for example, they do not believe they have any alternative.

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

- **Runaway:** a child or young person, who is absent from their home or placement without permission 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.
- **Looked After Child or Young Person:** a child is looked after by a local authority if s/he is “in care” by reason of a court order, or if s/he is provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by agreement with her/his parents or with the child if s/he is aged 16 or more.
- If the child is subject to a Care Order or Interim Care Order (Section 31 of the Children Act, 1989), then Children’s Services acquire parental responsibility and become a legal parent alongside the parent/guardian.
- If the child is accommodated under S20 of the Children Act 1989, s/he is looked after by the Local Authority with the voluntary agreement of his/her parents, or with the child if s/he is over 16 years old. Parental responsibility remains with the parent/guardian.
- **Child :** A child or young person under the age of eighteen years.
(19 years if suffering with a disability)
- **Unauthorised absence** (Association of Chief Police Officers’ definition): absent for a short period of time and after a careful and thorough risk assessment the absence does not raise concern for their immediate safety or that of the public. In accordance with the ACPO Manual of Guidance 2005 this period of absence should not exceed 6 hours.
- **Absconded:** When a child or young person has gone missing who is subject to an order or requirement resulting from the criminal justice process (e.g. remands, curfews, tagging, conditions of residence, ASBOs) or a secure order made in either civil or criminal proceedings. A young person in this category must be reported to the police without delay. Police must be made aware of the order under which the child has been placed in the residence and the expiry date of the order for the child to be classified as an absconder. If the expiry date of the order is not known, the child or young person will be classified as a “missing person” not an absconder.

4. Principles

4.1 This revised protocol has been agreed between:

West Mercia Police
Worcestershire County Council
Herefordshire Council
Shropshire Council
Telford & Wrekin Council

It refers to situations when children in the care of the Local Authority go missing from children's homes or foster placements. It is effective from 1st September 2009 and replaces the earlier versions of this protocol with any previously issued guidance.

This protocol should be read as **guidance**, which cannot anticipate every situation. Police, Children's Services staff and foster carers should use their professional judgment to take any action that is deemed necessary to protect the safety of the child, based on a robust and objective assessment of risk for each individual child.

4.2 Children who go missing from care may place themselves and others at risk. The reasons for their absence are often varied and complex and cannot be viewed in isolation from their home circumstances and their experiences of care. Every "missing" episode should attract proper attention from the professionals involved with the missing person and they **MUST** collaborate to ensure a consistent and coherent response is given to the missing person on his/her return.

4.3 Nationally, there is a problem of 'Looked after Children' going missing from their placement. This applies also in the West Mercia Police Authority Area.

4.4 Every missing episode is *potentially serious*.

4.5 Our joint aim is to reduce the incidence of 'Children Looked After' going missing.

4.6 When a looked after child does go missing our joint aim is to prevent that child suffering harm and to recover the child to safety as soon as possible.

4.7 We do this by partnership working, information sharing, problem solving, and performance management.

4.8 Interventions are important in attempting to address repeat missing episodes. Interventions must be informed by and reflected in the care plan.

4.9 Interventions must also be informed by effective return interviews with returning children. Young people's concerns will be taken seriously.

4.10 Interventions may be focused at the individual child, the care establishment or by targeting 'pull' factors in the community.

4.11 Children Services and/or Carers will report a young person missing to the police according to this protocol.

4.12 Children Services and/or Carers and the police will monitor compliance with the protocol and monitor outcomes jointly.

4.13 Together we will take steps to ensure improved responses and practice thereby delivering better outcomes for children.

5. Working Procedures

On Admission to the Placement – CARE PLAN

5.1 Each child should have a care plan based on a full assessment of the child's current and future needs, including potential risk to self or others. The care plan will therefore take account of any risk that the child may go missing in future and any factors which may increase the risk to the child should they go missing. Children's residential and fostering service staff should contribute to this assessment. All information should be included in the placement plan and in the child's care plan. As part of this assessment it may be appropriate for Children Services to consult with the police to share information that may be of relevance.

In the event of an emergency placement, the placement plan must analyse risk. In the absence of a placement plan the known basic information on the child should be recorded and risk assessed.

5.2 The care plan will remain in the possession of Children Services. It is NOT a public document. It is not envisaged that the police will need to view the care plan at any time. However, there may well be circumstances when it is necessary to involve the police in aspects of the care planning process to safeguard the child.

5.3 Should a child go missing it is vital to the safe recovery of the child that a recent photograph of the child is made available. The photograph must be a good likeness of the child, updated regularly if necessary, and of a suitable quality to be suitable for use in any official circulation or press release. Most commonly the photograph will be used by local police officers to help them recognise the child when patrolling or when actively looking for the child at relevant locations. In very serious cases, where the child is believed to be at severe risk, the police and local authority may decide to use the photograph more widely and even involve publishing the photograph to national or local media. If in such circumstances no such photograph were available we would be missing a vital opportunity to safeguard the child.

5.4 In respect of looked after children a recent photograph bearing a good likeness to the child will be kept on record by Children Services. When a young person is admitted to care the consent of a person with parental responsibility will be sought for a photograph to be used in any subsequent missing person investigation. If possible the agreement of the young person should also be gained.

5.5 Children Services will ensure that sufficient knowledge and information about the child is recorded to enable Carers to complete the missing person form (see Appendix E) should the child go missing in future. It will NOT be the responsibility of Children Services staff or other Care Providers/Workers to complete this form *per se*, but it is supplied to give insight as to requirements for in depth detailed information when completing such documentation, and for use in circumstances detailed in para 5.6 below.

5.6 When missing or unauthorised absence episodes are 'anticipated' by the Care Plan, a version of the Missing person form should be completed in advance to enable speedy and accurate reporting if and when required.

5.7 The residential unit manager/foster carer should consider the most appropriate ways to meet the above requirements and whether it is necessary and appropriate to discuss 'running away' with the child

5.8 It must be emphasised to every party that the completion of the Misper Report is NOT a 'form-filling exercise' but the initial foundation of a potential serious enquiry. As such, it should be regarded as a detailed, considered and evidential process. On no account will completed MISPER forms be merely 'collected' from Carers, without the officer and staff engaging in some meaningful investigative process and dialogue. The use of facsimile machines to 'send in' the report is wholly unacceptable.

6.0 Planning before any incident

Children Services and carers should adopt a consistent approach to the planning and assessment of "looked after children"

Where there is a likelihood that a child in care may go missing from their established placement their placement plan, completed by their key worker should include an assessment of the likelihood that the child might go missing and the risks they may face as a consequence.

Children's homes and fostering service staff should contribute to this assessment and review it after every incident of the child going missing. All information should be included in the placement plan and in the child's care plan. This assessment should include information on the following:

- the likelihood of the child going missing
- the child's view
- the level of supervision / support that care staff propose to provide for the child
- the views of parents / carers on their child's needs and the action that needs to be taken if the child is absent
- the risk of harm to the child and his/ her vulnerability if he/ she is absent
- consideration of any external influences that may result in a child's removal without consent.
- The likelihood of the child being harboured.

the child should have this protocol explained to him/ her and the potential dangers that they may encounter so that he / she understands the implication of being absent without authority, running away and / or going missing.

7. When the Young Person goes Missing - IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

7.1 Categories of absence have been agreed between the Police and Children Services. If a young person is absent from a care placement Children Services will decide which of the three categories the absence will fit; **absent without authority, missing, or absconder.**

7.2 In deciding the category of absence, all relevant Children Services and/or Care Agency staff must consider the circumstances of the child and their absence. This will include detailed consideration of:

- The circumstances of the absence.
- The child's care plan.
- The age of the child.
- The maturity of the child.
- Any physical or cognitive disability of the child.
- Any continuing or urgent need for the child to have medication or other medical treatment.
- The legal status of the child.
- Previous behaviour and history of the child.
- Danger posed by the child to themselves or others.
- General vulnerability of the child.
- The child's disposition towards drug/substance abuse.
- Whether the child is perceived as running to, or running from, someone or something.
- Any circumstances within the placement, say with carers or other residents that may be relevant to the absence.
- The risk of offending.
- The influence of peer groups, families or friends.
- Predatory influences on the child. These may relate to others wanting to use the child for crime, sex or drugs.
- Any known risk of abduction.
- Environmental factors including weather, time of year, community events or tensions.

7.3 Young people who are absent from their placement can be a matter of considerable concern to their carers and there is a need to locate them and ensure they are safe. The young people can be thought of as being on a continuum, with there being little cause for concern at one end, and with significant cause for concern at the other. Young people who are a few minutes late home from school would not normally give rise to concerns; they may have missed the bus, or they may be exhibiting normal adolescent boundary-testing, to establish the parameters of acceptable behaviour, or to show their disagreement with aspects of their placement. It is not helpful to consider every momentary absence as warranting a formal missing person report.

7.4 However, at some point, depending upon the child and the circumstances, the young person's absence will give rise to justifiable concern and require a formal missing person report to the police. Whilst there can be no substitute for a considered judgement, based on a sound assessment of the young person and the circumstances, it is the purpose of this framework to assist carers to structure their thinking with regard to the three categories of absence. This decision should not be taken in isolation, residential staff should consult with the senior member on duty and foster carers should liaise with the young person's social worker or EDT staff. The situation should be kept under constant review and changes in circumstances taken into account. If the young person is receiving support from CAMHS professionals, Educational Psychologists and so on, it may be advisable to discuss the case with them. However, if they are not readily available a decision must be

made on the basis of the best available information. In cases of doubt it may also be appropriate to discuss the case with a local police supervisor.

7.5 Each case must be decided on merit and a formal missing person report to the police may be actioned earlier in some circumstances than in others. Indeed for a small number of young people it may be appropriate to report them as a missing person immediately. Normally this will have been previously agreed as part of the Care Plan because of the young person's vulnerability.

7.6 The fact that the young person may have gone missing on a number of previous occasions does not reduce the risk. In fact, children who repeatedly go missing are often being enticed away from their placement by risky activities that they see as exciting or by predatory influences. Furthermore, short absences may be as risky as lengthy ones.

The Categories and consequent actions are outlined below: -

8. Unauthorised absence (No apparent risk)

8.1 There are a number of situations where young people will be considered as absent without authority, most commonly when young people are accidentally or deliberately late home to the placement or when their whereabouts are known and do not jeopardise their safety or well-being.

8.2 If the young person's whereabouts are known or suspected, Children Services staff will decide whether to allow the young person to remain at that location, albeit temporarily, or to arrange for their return. If the decision is to arrange their return and there is reason to believe that there may be public order difficulties, the Police will assist. Police assistance in these circumstances does NOT mean that the young person is categorised as missing.

8.3 Another example of unauthorised absence is the child who is late home. Each such occurrence needs to be evaluated based upon the factors mentioned in para. 7.2 and upon other information gleaned from the child themselves, friends, family and associates.

8.4 It is not usually expected that the first response of a carer in circumstances where a child is late home will be to report the child as missing to the Police. Before doing so, the carer should, within the constraints of the care setting, take all steps a responsible parent would take, to try to locate the child and to make a careful assessment in accordance with para. 7.2.

8.5 Another example of an unauthorised absence could be when a child runs away from a placement following an incident or occurrence at the placement. Here, like with lateness it is not usually expected that the first response of a carer will be to report the child as missing to the Police. Before doing so, the carer should, within the constraints of the care setting, take all steps a responsible parent would take, to try to locate the child and to make a careful assessment in accordance with para. 7.2. In addition to the factors in para 7.2 consideration should also be given to the circumstances and causation factors that lead to the running away, insofar as they impact upon risk to the child.

8.6 In respect of unauthorised absence, carers should NOT report the matter to the Police.

8.7 However, a clear judgement needs to be made in each individual case as to the length of time that elapses before a child who is absent becomes categorised as missing.

8.8 The initial responsibility for this judgement must rest with the carer.

8.9 Certainly it will not be appropriate for any child, whose whereabouts are not known and who cannot be contacted, to remain out overnight, without being formally reported as missing.

8.10 The Carers or Children Services will be expected to make relevant enquiries as to the whereabouts of the child that ANY REASONABLE AND DILIGENT PARENT WOULD UNDERTAKE. This would include physically attending and searching places known to be frequented, contacting and/or visiting the addresses of friends and associates, contacting the school or other service providers etc. All these actions must be recorded (if only for future reference) and timed, and should be shared with the Police in the event of the missing episode not being resolved at this early stage.

8.11 A period of **six hours** should be regarded as the absolute maximum for any child whose whereabouts are not known and who cannot be contacted, to remain categorised as absent without authority, rather than being formally reported as missing; in many cases a shorter period will be appropriate.

9. Missing

9.1 A Child will be categorized as 'Missing' where the child's location or reason for absence is unknown and/or due to the circumstances, there is cause for concern for the child or potential danger to the public.

9.2 Reporting a young person missing involves providing detailed information to the Police on the Missing Person Form. This will be done by a telephone call to the West Mercia Police Call Management Centre 0300 333 3000.

9.3 It is important that the carer makes it clear to the police that they are reporting a child as '**missing**' and NOT as an 'unauthorised absence'. The carer should always ask for, and record a police OIS (Operational Information System) log reference number. The police will record the case as a 'Missing Person'. It will lead to a proactive police investigation managed locally by the police on the 'COMPACT' computer system. Moreover, the individual will be circulated nationally via the Police National Computer system)

9.4 When receiving a Missing Person report the police will tailor their response to the circumstances. If information is available to suggest a possible location of the Missing Person, and this gives rise to concerns about the safety of the young person, the Police response will be to address those concerns as soon as practicable. This may lead perhaps to postponing the administrative recording duties for a short time in favour of safeguarding the interests of the child.

9.5 While the decision to categorise an absent child as 'Missing' ultimately lies with the carer in consultation with Children Services, the decision about the risk level attributed to the case lies with the Police. In making both decisions, dialogue between carers and Police is encouraged (if not essential).

9.6 The carer will provide information about risk factors in the case. These should be provided in the initial report to the Police (often by telephone) and formalised on the Missing Person form.

9.7 After considering this and other information the Police will decide the risk level to be assigned to the case. This will be High or, Medium.

A child who is missing from care will never be treated as LOW risk.

9.8 A police officer will attend all reports of missing children. They will require further information to assist the investigation of the missing child e.g.

- known acquaintances and addresses frequented
- any previous history of being missing and circumstances where found
- the name and addresses of the child's GP and dentist
- details of when the child was last seen and with whom.
- a recent photograph
- mobile phone number of child, email and bank account details (to help with tracking)

The attending officer will record this information on the COMPACT missing person form.

9.9 All reports of missing children will be subject to a risk assessment by the Police. This is a subjective assessment and determines the appropriate level of investigation. It is an ongoing process and will be reviewed throughout.

Police have two categories of risk for all missing children and its important that all residential and foster placement staff are aware of them.

These are;

High Risk

The risk posed is IMMEDIATE and there are grounds for believing the child is in danger through their own vulnerability; or may have been the victim of a serious crime: or the risk posed is IMMEDIATE and there are SUBSTANTIAL grounds for believing the public is in danger.

Medium Risk

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

9.10 Even after reporting a child missing it should be recognised that Children Services are responsible for children in their care at all times and that responsibility is not absolved when they have reported the child missing to the Police.

9.11 During the course of a missing report Police will make contact with the placing Authority (or if out of hours their EDT.) This contact will help to better inform the risk level and will assist in identifying appropriate enquiries.

9.12 In the event of any dispute arising over the level or risk posed to any individual child, the matter should be referred expeditiously to the Divisional Duty Inspector.

9.13 West Mercia Police has decided that no case involving a child in care under the age of 18 years (19yrs if suffering with a disability) will be classified as a Low Risk.

9.14 In accordance with National Protocol the police will also inform The National Missing Person Bureau of the case:

- In High-risk cases after a period of 3 hours has elapsed.
- In Medium-risk cases after a period of 72 hours has elapsed.
- In Low risk cases after a period of 14 days has elapsed.

9.15 Carers must also inform without delay:

- The parents/those who have parental responsibility (unless indicated otherwise on the care plan).
- The key social worker or the accountable team manager.
- The emergency duty team if out of hours and the social worker and accountable team manager at the start of the next working day.

9.16 Missing during and external activity.

If a child becomes absent whilst on an external activity, the carer or member of staff in charge will;

- Arrange an initial search of the area the child was last seen.
- Notify the local Police immediately. This should be the Police Force who are responsible for the area in which the child was last seen. This report should NOT be delayed until the carers have returned back to the care placement.
- Notify the child's Social Worker or the accountable team manager both locally and within the placing authority.
- Notify the senior manager at home (if applicable)
- Notify the emergency out of hours duty team (if applicable)

10. 0 Absconders.

10.1 An absconder is a young person who is absent from the placement without permission and who is subject to an order or requirement resulting from the criminal justice process (e.g. remands, curfews, tagging, conditions of residence, other bail conditions, PACE detention or ASBO's), or a secure order made in either civil or criminal proceedings. A young person in this category must be reported to the police without delay.

10.2 If an absconder is under the age of 18 years, or if the absconding does not involve a power of arrest, the Police will treat the case as BOTH a Missing Person AND an absconder. This means that it will be necessary to provide detailed information to the Police on the Missing Person form. The paragraphs in section 8 and section 9 of this protocol will apply. This will lead to a proactive Police investigation managed locally by the Police on the 'COMPACT' computer system. Moreover, the individual will be circulated nationwide via the Police National Computer System. When the person is traced however, it is likely that they will also be arrested or dealt with by the police in relation to any offence or breach.

10.3 However, if the person is aged 16 or over and is liable to arrest the Police will treat the person solely as an absconder and not as a Missing Person, unless there are grounds to suspect that factors other than the absconders desire to evade justice are involved in their disappearance. If the Police treat the case solely as one of absconding, in these circumstances they will actively seek the absconder for arrest. Notwithstanding, absconders in this category must also be reported to the Police without delay.

11. Areas of Individual and Corporate Responsibility

11.1 Before reporting a missing child to the Police it will normally fall to carers to

- Thoroughly search the care establishment and its grounds to verify that the child is in fact absent.
- Search the establishment for any important leads (i.e. mobile phones, diaries, letters, notes explaining absence, email and website activity etc), which may inform the investigation and/or assist in protecting or recovering the child.
- Speak with other residents to obtain relevant information about the missing child.
- Make all appropriate telephone enquiries regard the whereabouts of the child. This will involve trying to contact the child themselves, friends, family, associates, appropriate locations, local hospitals and the local Police custody units.
- Assist the Police to complete the Missing Person report form and forward the results of all the above enquiries.

11.2 Even after reporting a child missing, Children Services remain responsible for the child in their care. This responsibility is not absolved when the child has been reported missing to the Police.

11.3 Carers and the child's social worker will be responsible for liaising with the Police, taking an active interest in the investigation and passing on all information, which may help to inform the investigation and assist in protecting the child while absent.

11.4 Carers and the child's social worker should continue to make appropriate enquiries with other residents or by telephone with all persons who may be able to assist with the investigation unless they are requested not to do so by the Police. All information gleaned from these enquiries should be documented and passed to the Police.

11.5 Once a child is reported missing to the Police, the Police will have primacy in respect of the investigation to trace the child.

11.6 The Police will normally conduct all physical enquiries away from the premises from which the child is absent.

11.7 In certain circumstances the Police may need to validate the enquiries initially performed by care staff at para. 10.1. When necessary they will do so in liaison with appropriate Children Services staff and will do so sensitively, causing as little disruption as possible to the establishment and residents.

11.8 Throughout the process in this protocol, residential carers and social workers must keep a full record of all actions taken and messages received and given. Police will likewise keep a record of all aspects of the investigation on the 'COMPACT' system.

11.9 Informing the media

In some cases, particularly where a missing child is felt to be especially vulnerable

(High Risk) or where they have been missing for several days it may be necessary to publicise the case via the media. Such an approach is not routine but is usually a response to serious concerns for the child's safety. Either Carers or the Police may suggest such an approach. Decisions to publicise should be jointly made and a meeting to discuss a media release should be convened with Police, Children Services, care home managers and the child's parents.

However, for operational reasons, primacy over such decisions must lie with the Police particularly if the case is urgent. In these cases every effort should be made to contact all agencies and parents by telephone in an attempt to jointly agree details of the press release.

Unless it is necessary, the child will not be identified as a child in care.

11.10 If the case falls involves the abduction of a child in care then any decision to publicise the case is likely to be urgent. It will be made in accordance with nationally agreed procedures by a Police officer of the rank of Superintendent. Where practicable, Children Services will be consulted in advance.

12. Enquiry Review

12.1 When a child has been absent for a period of 24 hours the social worker should inform their relevant senior manager via the usual line management route.

12.2 Throughout the enquiry, carers and the Police will continually review the case. After the young person has been missing for 5 days, **or earlier, if deemed appropriate**, the Police and child's social worker will hold an urgent case review meeting. It will involve Police Officers, carers, the child's social worker, and any other care professional involved in the care of the child.

The meeting will review: -

- What action has been taken so far by the Police and care professionals;
- What action needs to be taken by the Police and care professionals;
- Decide whether the young person should return to that placement when located;
- Consider any other relevant information.

Further such reviews will take place at least every 7 days thereafter **or earlier, if deemed appropriate**.

13. Return of the Young Person

13.1 If the whereabouts are known or suspected, it is the responsibility of Children Services to arrange for the young person's return.

13.2 However, there will be circumstances when, in the interests of the safe and speedy return of the young person, the Police may accede to requests from Children Services to assist. The Police should not unreasonably withhold assistance in cases involving local recovery and transport missions for vulnerable children. However, the Police will not accede to requests to provide escorts for young runaways, which would involve officers leaving their normal areas of patrol.

13.3 It is the responsibility of the carer to contact the Police by telephone and to confirm that the missing child has returned to the home. The Police will accept confirmation from care professionals without the need for an officer to attend the home, and the Missing Report will be cancelled on the Police National Computer. Police will visit the returnee as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter to conduct a debrief of that missing episode. This will lead to the Police closing the Missing Person investigation.

13.4 If it is apparent, upon the return of a young person, that they have been the victim of a crime whilst absent, or that they may be in danger or at risk from any person arising out of circumstances that have occurred whilst they were absent, then the Police must be called and asked to attend without delay. This is vital for the protection of the child and for the speedy recovery of evidence.

13.5 In such circumstances, the Missing Person's clothing, mobile phone and trace evidence from their body, fingernails or hair may be crucial. In cases of sexual abuse the child should be discouraged from washing and immediate advice sought

from the Police. If carers become aware of the location of the scene of any crime committed against the young person, or of the location of any crucial evidence (i.e. a used condom) they must notify the Police without delay. This will enable the police to take steps to secure and preserve evidence.

13.6 In sexual cases the Police have access to specially trained officers, doctors and facilities designed to care for the victim and obtain evidence.

13.7 Additionally, in matters of sexual exploitation, referral must be made under any relevant Safeguarding Children Procedures.

13.8 When a young person returns to the placement it is the responsibility of the carers to notify any person notified of the missing episode under para 8.8.

14. Return Interviews.

14.1 West Mercia Police are responsible for ensuring that a return interview is conducted for each missing episode. This debrief will contribute to the Closing Report within the COMPACT missing person system.

14.2 However experience has shown that these Police debriefings are of little to no value as the officer does not have the confidence and ear of the formerly Missing Person. Also the Missing person may well want to protect their support network of friends and associates who have provide help and succour. Additionally they may see it as in their best interests to remain mute on this subject, as they may wish to utilise this support network should they plan to go missing again.

14.3 Children Services are ALSO responsible for ensuring that a return interview is conducted for each missing episode. This may form part of the Police interview, but if information/intelligence is not forthcoming during that Police interview, or suspected misinformation is supplied, then Children Services should conduct a separate return interview.

14.4 Ideally a person independent of the care placement should conduct this. Account should also be taken over any preference the young person has for the conducting of the return interview.

14.5 Current best practice identified by the Children Society is to train and avail staff in one home to debrief Mispers in another home, with a reciprocal arrangement conversely in place. Children Services and Care Providers are urged to research and/or implement such a working arrangement and/or workable alternative.

14.6 When it is not practicable for a return interview to be conducted by the most suitable person, or an independent person, it is better that an interview is conducted by any care professional than no interview being conducted at all.

14.7 The return interview should be completed as soon as possible. It is expected that it will be conducted within 72 hours of the child's return. However, a late return interview is better than no return interview at all.

14.8 The purpose of the interview is:

- To discover the **factors** which led to the missing episode.
- To inform efforts to **prevent** further missing episodes.
- To inform any **future** missing person investigation should that person go missing again.
- To **learn** of the activities, associates, risks and victimisation involved in the missing episode, and where possible to **address** those risks.

14.9 The return interview is important in safeguarding the child in future. It must NOT be viewed or conducted as a routine administrative task.

14.10 The interview will be recorded on the Found Report included within the missing person report.

14.11 The record of interview will be forwarded to the Police, where possible electronically, in accordance with locally agreed procedures. It will be added to the 'COMPACT' missing person record for that episode.

14.12 In some circumstances the child may make extremely sensitive disclosures that the carer feels need particularly careful management. If so, the carer may disclose on the form that there are sensitive matters disclosed by the child, which are **not** included on the form. These disclosures should be the subject of a **separate** record retained by the placement.

14.13 In such circumstances it will usually be appropriate for the carer to discuss such cases with the Police Missing Person 'champion' for the area. Such records must be kept in such a manner that will become immediately accessible in the event of a future missing episode, when they may become relevant to the investigation to recover and safeguard the child.

14.14 Where a return interview leads to a disclosure that needs specific action, e.g. to investigate a crime against the young person or requires measures to safeguard the child, the matter should be referred:-

- In urgent cases to the Police, via telephone.
- In non-urgent cases to the Police Missing Person 'champion' for the area in question.
- To Senior managers in Children's Services
- Additionally, in matters of sexual exploitation or any other factors indicating 'significant harm,' to the Detective Inspector in charge of the Divisional Public Protection Unit.

15. Police Powers

15.1 The Police have significant powers to safeguard vulnerable children.

15.2 These include powers to enter premises, to recover children whilst exercising their powers of protection.

15.3 When a missing child is found or known to have been in company with any older person during any missing episode, in circumstances which afford reasonable grounds to suspect that an offence has been committed by that older person relating in any way to that child (i.e. child abduction, sexual offence, drug offence, assault, aid, abet, counsel or procuring child to commit an offence etc) the incident will be taken seriously throughout the process of reporting, investigation and provision of follow up care. The Police priority is the safety and well being of the child; thereafter, the Police will take 'positive action' against any perpetrators, hold them accountable for their actions and prefer charges where appropriate.

15.4 Police officers dealing with such incidents are encouraged to use the full range of powers of arrest available to them. Police officers should ensure that all the available evidence is collated in order that an informed decision can be made relating to whether a prosecution should be pursued. It is recognised that children who have been the victim of a serious offence may not always see themselves as victims or be willing to assist in the investigation, particularly in the early stages. Likewise those whom others have used for criminal purposes may not be willing to assist the Police. A complaint from a victim is not required to make an arrest.

15.5 Officers will not be deterred from making appropriate lawful arrests in these cases, by real difficulties often faced in obtaining sufficient evidence to mount successful prosecutions.

15.6 Circumstantial evidence, together with evidence from scenes, vehicles, mobile telephony and carers may well assist to build a case further. Moreover, children who initially refuse to assist Police investigations may later agree, particularly when those who have preyed upon them have been arrested.

15.7 Finally, it is much better to arrest and investigate thoroughly, even if a successful prosecution cannot be brought, than it is to give tacit approval to those who abuse missing children by failing to arrest them in the first place.

15.8 Without prejudice to the welfare of any child, Children Services will support the police in taking appropriate but robust action against those who involve 'looked after children' in their offending behaviour.

15.9 Prosecution of Individuals Harboursing Children.

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 persistent absconders and continue to be harboured by the same individual consideration should be given to prosecution under the Child Abduction Act.

West Mercia Police have developed a warning notice for harbourers which can be used at an early stage prior to any prosecution.

(See Appendix D)

If the harbourer is suspected of sexual exploitation or other abuse consideration should be given to securing evidence to prosecute at the earliest opportunity.

If evidence suggests that the harbourer has no malicious intent then the primary intent is to ensure that the warning notice is effective so that their behaviour changes and a prosecution is not necessary.

GENERAL

The law does not generally regard young people under the age of 16 as being able to live independently away from home.

Anyone who has care of a child without parental responsibility may do what is reasonable to safeguard and promote the child's welfare (Children Act 1989 and Section 3(5)). In these circumstances, it might well be reasonable to inform the Police and if appropriate, their parents, of a child's safety and whereabouts.

A court can make a Recovery Order concerning a child in care, subject to an Emergency Protection Order if there are grounds to believe the he/ she has been lawfully taken away from the person responsible for his care, if he has run away or been missing from care. The order acts as a direction for the child to be produced or for disclosure as to his whereabouts. If the court has reasonable grounds to believe the child is on premises it may permit a constable to enter named premises to search for the child using reasonable force if necessary.

A person who unlawfully removes, keep away. Assists or otherwise encourages a child 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 under section 49 of the Act and liable to prosecution)

16. Prevention Strategy

16.1 Children Services and Police will monitor the absences of individual children and absences from each residential establishment. This monitoring will be presented in a quarterly report prepared by a Police analyst and shared with Children Services.

16.2 West Mercia Police and Children Services will operate an escalating system of interventions to reduce the likelihood of a child repeatedly going missing.

16.3 Intervention meetings should take place in the event of repeat episodes of children going missing from care. The intervention meetings will normally be convened by the Police and will be chaired by Children Services responsible for the young person.

For these meetings to work, and thereby improve our collective responses, appropriate attendance and clarity of purpose are essential.

These meetings can be suspended (with the agreement of all partners to this protocol) if work is already being conducted by any partner agency to address the missing episodes.

The intervention meetings should be held within a week of any trigger episode. The meetings should be chaired and recorded and the increased levels of concern reflected in the seniority of those attending as follows:-

16.4 One Individual having Three Missing Person Episodes in 90 Days:

Divisional Missing Person Liaison Officer to host Inter-Agency Meeting with relevant partner agencies (e.g. Key Social Worker, Care Home Manager, Parents if appropriate and other relevant or interested parties) to review placement, patterns of Missing episodes, individual 'push-pull' factors and strategies to eliminate problem(s).

Alternatively, where no Divisional Missing Person Liaison Officer (or equivalent) is appointed – Social worker (chair), Local Police Officer, residential worker or foster carer/family placement worker (as appropriate), person who conducted return interview if different to above.

16.5 This meeting should try to identify any 'push' or 'pull' factor in the case and any other voluntary or statutory agency, which has an interest, or may take an interest, in the Missing Person's welfare and circumstances. In the case of 'pull' factors it may be necessary to target those in the community who harbour the Missing Person or exploit them with regard to crime, sex or drugs.

16.6 One individual having between Four and Six Missing Episodes in One Year:

Police Deputy Divisional Missing Person Champion (Inspector) to host Inter-Agency Meeting with relevant Partner Agencies i.e. team manager from children's services, residential unit manager/assistant or family placement manager (as appropriate), social worker, representatives from health and/or education (as appropriate) person who conducted return interview (if different to above). The purpose of the meeting is to review placement, patterns of Missing episodes, individual 'push-pull' factors and strategies to eliminate problems(s).

16.7 This level of intervention meeting is the crucial stage in avoiding serious escalation and must, therefore, be given high priority by all concerned.

16.8 One individual having between seven and nine episodes in One Year:

Divisional Misper Champion (Chief Inspector) to host Inter-Agency Meeting with relevant Partner Agencies i.e. team manager from children's services, Police Missing Person Liaison Officer or Local Police Sergeant, residential manager or family placement manager (as appropriate), social worker, representatives from health and/or education (as appropriate) person who conducted return interview if different to above. The purpose of this meeting is to review placement, patterns of Missing Episodes, individual 'push-pull' factors and strategies to eliminate problem(s).

16.9 Meetings at this level should be rare provided that this protocol has been followed with regard to earlier intervention meetings and return interviews. Additionally, should this level of Missing episodes be apparent, this is clear evidence

that the placement is not working. If it is not working, then it fails everyone including the child.

16.10 In addition to seeking to reduce future missing episodes and reduce any apparent risks to the child, these meetings should also quality assure compliance with the protocols and the efficacy of earlier intervention meetings and return interviews.

16.11 At this stage a report about the case should be forwarded to the Force Missing Persons Strategic Lead, as the case will feature in the quarterly analysts report on Missing Persons.

16.12 If the person continues to be reported missing beyond this level the Senior Management Team for the Division should discuss the case and consider whether it is appropriate them to intervene further or for the Assistant Chief Constable (SO) to be asked to intervene.

16.13 It should be noted, however, that the **volume** of cases is not the only reason to launch an intervention or to escalate the level of intervention. The following are both examples of other reasons to launch or escalate interventions:

- Any case where the risks involved in even a single future missing episode are very high.
- Cases where it has been identified that immediate action is necessary to ensure the well being of the person.

16.14 A record shall be made of all interventions on the COMPACT Missing Person 'intervention' system.

16.15 When Children Services or police believe that an adult is adversely involved with a child or children who are going missing from home, in addition to any action taken under section 14 of this protocol, the Police and Children Services will consider what more can be done to protect the child(ren).

16.16 This may involve the making of a formal witness statement by the local authority manager, specifically prohibiting that adult from having any contact with named children, without exceptions. The Police would then show the adult a copy of the statement, a photograph of the child (which they would not be allowed to keep) and serve upon that adult a warning harbouring notice prohibiting the adult from having any contact whatsoever with the child and explaining any breach would be dealt with by arrest under section 2 Child Abduction Act 1984.

16.17 Alternatively the relevant local authority, supported by the Police, may decide to institute civil proceedings to obtain an injunction preventing any particular adult having any contact with a named child.

16.18 ORGANISATIONAL REVIEW – One ESTABLISHMENT having in excess of 20 Missing Episodes in One Year:

Divisional Superintendent to host Inter-Agency Meeting with relevant partners to review placement, patterns of Missing Episodes, individual 'push-pull' factors and strategies to eliminate problem(s). At the conclusion of same, Superintendent to

review overarching factors to decide and report upon suitability to provide care 'in loco parentis'.

If doubt exists, the Divisional Superintendent should commission an evidenced report for onward transmission to the Assistant Chief Constable (SO) for review. If a clear case for concern exists, the ACC (SO) may then authorise a report direct to OFSTED (formerly the National Commission for Social Care and Inspection).

SIGNED.....Date.....

PRINT NAME

JOB TITLE & ORGANISATION.....

SIGNED.....Date.....

PRINT NAME

JOB TITLE & ORGANISATION.....

SIGNED.....Date.....

PRINT NAME

JOB TITLE & ORGANISATION.....

SIGNED.....Date.....

PRINT NAME

JOB TITLE & ORGANISATION.....

SIGNED.....Date.....

PRINT NAME

JOB TITLE & ORGANISATION.....

Appendix "A": Missing From Care Risk Assessment and Action Plan

To be completed for all young people looked after where a risk of running away has been identified or after the first occasion a young person has run away.

Planned Placement: To be completed at pre placement planning meeting

Emergency Placement: To be completed within 3 working days

The meeting should always include the carer and Social Worker, also Family Placement Officer when applicable. The meeting will usually also include the young person and her/his parents unless this is deemed inappropriate. If issues are complex, consider consultation with the Police Missing from Home Officer. This assessment should be updated on a regular basis (minimum every 6 months).

Name of Child or Young person:.....

ID:.....

Date of Birth:.....Age:.....Legal Status.....

Date of Meeting.....

Date of Review.....

Any child or young person **12 y/o or under** whose whereabouts are unknown will automatically be considered as at **higher risk** and classed as **missing or absconded**. They **must** be reported to the police immediately. For children or young people 13 y/o and above, this risk assessment must be completed and be based on age, current circumstances, experiences, background and ability. This will help to establish an assessment of their vulnerability. The risk indicators should prompt the assessment and any relevant information, which should be included under the section "risk assessment information".

Risk indicators	Risk assessment information
Pattern and History	
What are the usual circumstances of the child/young person going missing ie is the young person running to someone or from a situation? When does the young person usually leave the home?	
When was the last episode and is there a pattern?	
Where do they usually go? i.e. with family or friends or with people who are unknown or undesirable. Is there any specific risk if they go there?	
Level of maturity young person has shown in being able to make decisions about themselves or	

others. How able is the young person to cope without adult support?	
Past method of return i.e via family or on their own?	
Concerns/Vulnerabilities	
Any concerns about Mental Health?	
Risk of suicide/self-harm and what are the indicators of this?	
Medication/medical condition?	
Physical or learning disability/difficulties?	
Likely use of drugs/alcohol/solvents and what type and amount?	
Risk of sexual exploitation and have sexual exploitation protocols been activated (meeting to discuss strategy to address sexual exploitation) Any previous harm suffered while absent?	
Any concerns about new friends/partners/associates?	
Past involvement of offending and in what form? Is the child/young person's behaviour likely to be a risk to the community and in what way?	
Are they experiencing bullying/racial and/or homophobic abuse? Any signs or indicators that child is experiencing difficulties or abuse in the placement?	
Does the young person want to live in the current placement?	
Any concern of abduction or being prevented from returning? Is there a risk of forced marriage?	
Are there any known issues/events happening in the child's/young person's family or close friends?	

Current Circumstances	
What are the agreed coming in times?	
Do they have access to any money and how if necessary will they obtain this?	
Is the young person able to use public transport?	
Does the young person usually carry a bus pass?	
Is the young person familiar with the surrounding area?	
Do they have a mobile phone?	
Any further information and knowledge	

This risk assessment grid above should be used as a guide and involve discussion and pooling of information to agree an informed risk assessment. In cases of little knowledge or where there is disagreement, the child or young person should be considered as being at higher risk.

Concluding risk assessment in the event of the child/young person failing to return.

ACTION PLAN to be implemented

1. Thoroughly search the building and immediate surrounding area.
2. Try to contact the young person on their mobile
3. Contact family/ relatives / friends as follows

Parents Yes/No

Grandparents/other family members Yes/No

Brothers/sisters Yes/No

Friends Yes/No

4. If whereabouts are known, the young person is absent without authority. What steps need to be taken to enable their return?
-

5. Addresses where young person is known to go:

Address	Level of known risk at address	Action to be taken (including the need to make a "Concern for Welfare" report to the police?)*	Maximum time before reporting to police

***If the young person is not judged to be safe at any of the above addresses, then report to the police without delay.**

6. **Action to take if whereabouts are not known:**

If absent for more than _____ hours after due back regard as Missing from Home and start Missing From Home procedures

N.B. The maximum period to delay a Missing Report is 6 hours from when the young person is due to return. This is the maximum period and in most situations, much shorter periods may be appropriate.

Where risks are identified, the missing report should be made without delay.

If the child or young person does not return within the agreed interval and there is no additional information that reduces risk, or if there is information that increases risk, the child or young person needs to be reclassified as missing, and necessary action taken.

Any Further Action to be taken to reduce the likelihood of the young person going missing (in bullet points, including Support and Prevention Strategies)

Social Worker to visit following return withindays (within 1 after 1st episode, to a maximum of 3 days for subsequent episodes)

Signature of residential staff member/foster carer PRINT NAME

..... Date:.....

Signature of Social Worker: PRINT NAME

..... Date:.....

Signature of Young Person PRINT NAME

..... Date:.....

Signature of Parent: PRINT NAME

..... Date:.....

Signature of Family Placement Officer: PRINT NAME

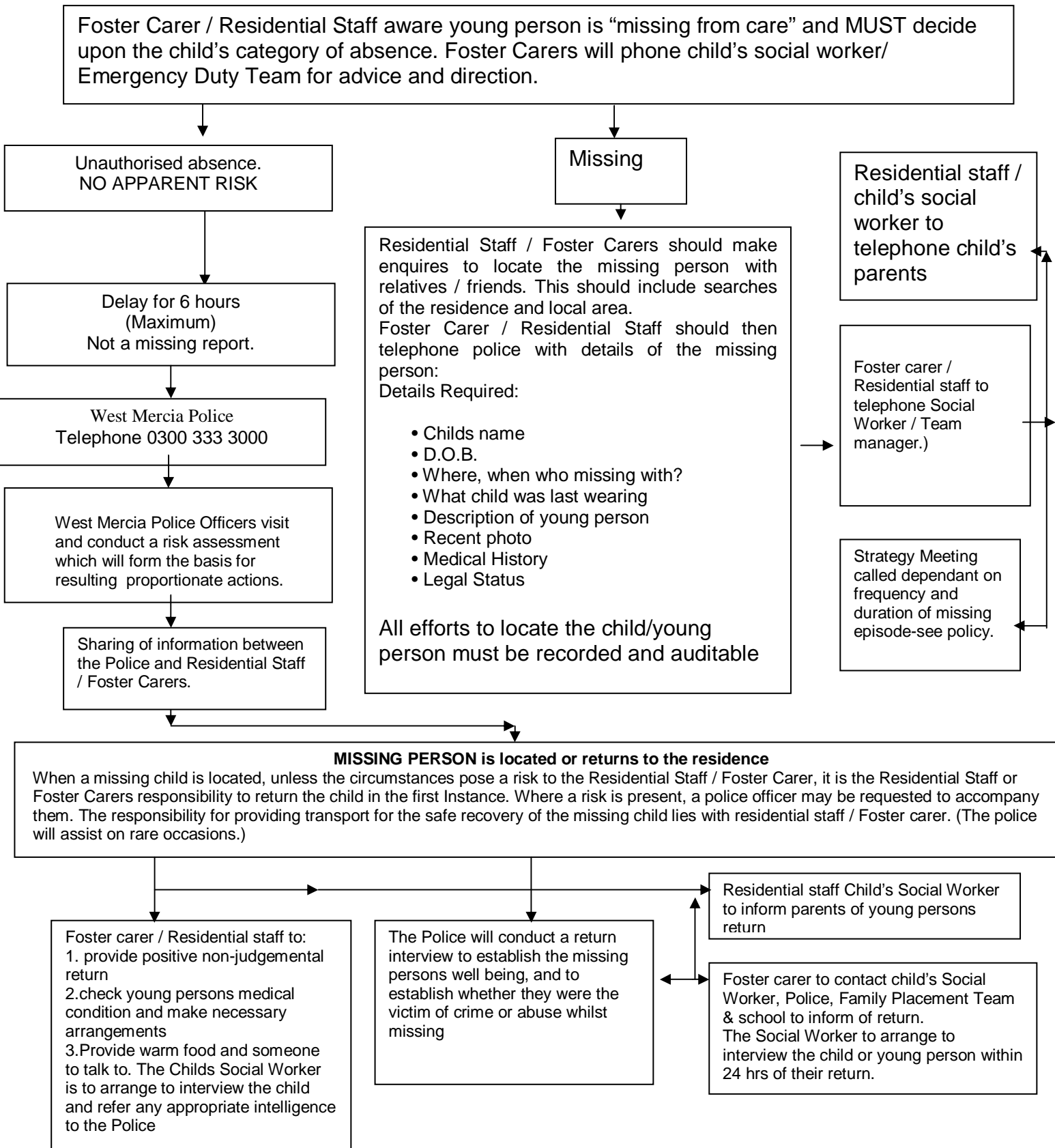
..... Date:.....

Signature of Team Manager (Social Work team) PRINT NAME

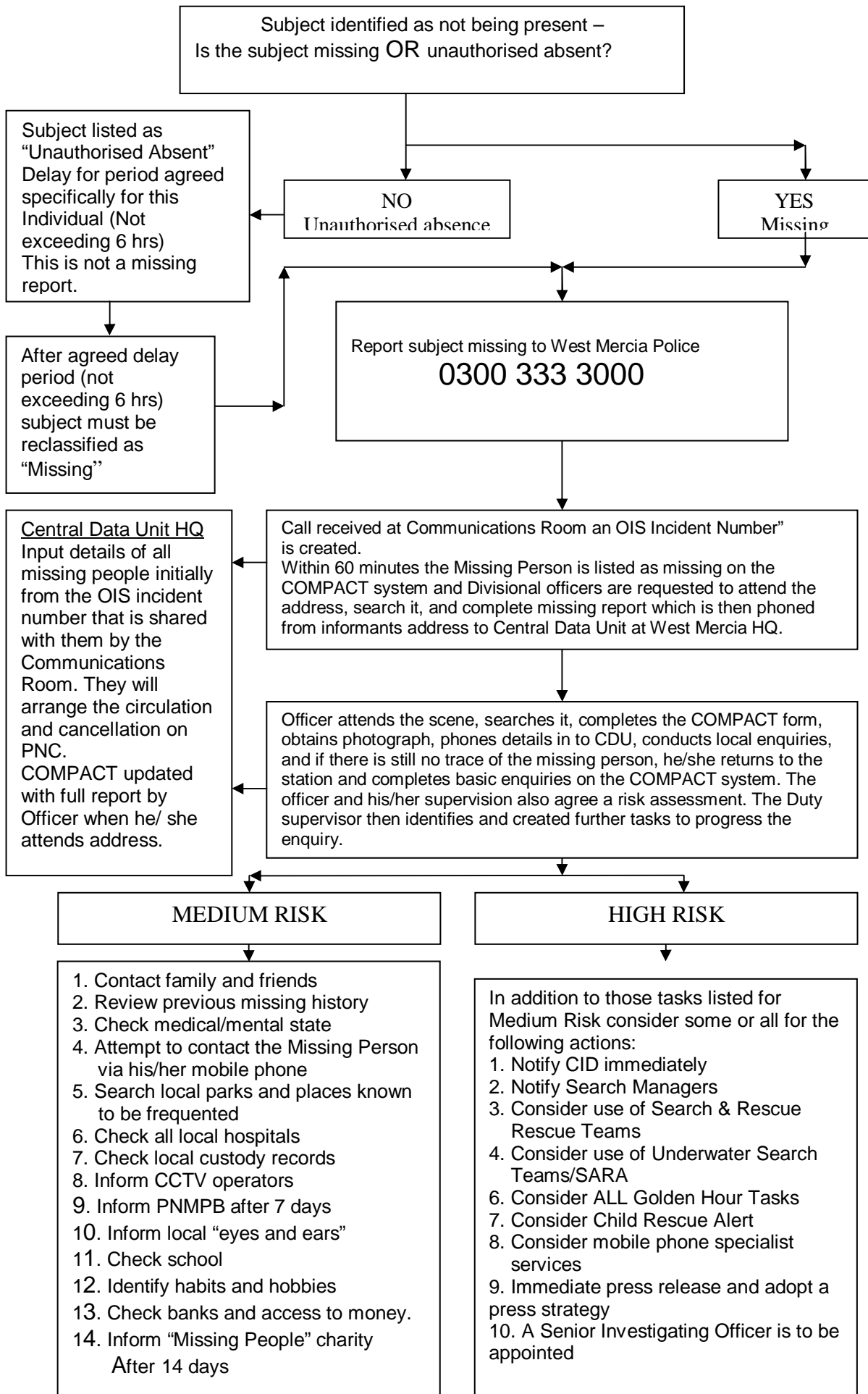
..... Date:.....

APPENDIX "B"

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE – MISSING FROM CARE FLOW CHART



WEST MERCIA POLICE MISSING PERSON INVESTIGATION CHART



↓ ↓

Young Person is located or returns to home address.

When a missing child is located by family or friends etc, it is their responsibility to return the child to the home address.

Where a risk is present, a police officer may accompany the family or the police may be requested to collect and return the child/young person to the place of residence only if it is safe to do so. Parents must inform the Police when a child returns of their own accord.

↓

The Police should conduct an interview known as a Safe and well check to establish whether they were the victim of crime or abuse whilst missing. If warranted, police should refer the child or young person to Children Services via normal safeguarding channels.

↓

Children Services or runaway/ missing person service to carry out a return interview and Assessment of Need.

Information established from interview to support assessment of need, to be carried out using the CAF (checks whether CAF already exists)

↓

Young Person offered relevant support by either statutory or voluntary services, depending on what is available in the local area, CAF to be updated regularly. In some cases, specialist assessment may be required should it appear that the child or young person has complex needs

Harbouring notice.

Section 2 – Child Abduction Act 1984

On

You,....., are now receiving an official warning that the parent / carer of being a child under the age of 16 years has **absolutely banned outright with no exceptions** from visiting any address which you reside, or you are at, and / or from associating with you at any place.

If you subsequently allow to be at an address at which you reside or are at and / or associate with this child **you will be arrested for Child Abduction.**

You have now been shown a photograph of

Inspector

Child Abduction carries a maximum sentence of 7 YEARS imprisonment

Appendix "E"

MISSING PERSON REPORT COMPACT Intranet System

Ever previously missing (known to officer): Yes No
**Officer taking report must complete this form as fully as possible before phoning input to CDU on:
 0808 100 6564 or Ext 2208**

MISSING PERSON DETAILS <i>(alert CDU when phoning, if you believe this person's details may already be on COMPACT)</i>							
Title <i>(Mr/Mrs/Miss/etc)</i> :							
Surname:		Aliases/Nicknames: Forenames:					
ID Status: ID known but not confirmed / Identity misused / ID known & confirmed by FPs, DNA profile or police photo							
Date of Birth:		Age:	Place of Birth:				
Maiden Name:		Sex:	Male	Female Unknown			
Marital Status:		Married	Single	Divorced	Separated Widowed		
Nationality:		Photograph Obtained: Yes/ No 'please send to CDU supervisors via email)					
NI No <i>(Over 16 Only)</i> :		PNC ID:					
PERSON NOTES		Alias DOB / Misper accompanied by					
COMPACT PID:		DNA Material Taken: Yes No					
CURRENT ADDRESS							
Premises <i>(name and/or house number)</i> :							
Street:			Home Phone:				
District:			Work Phone:				
Town:			Mobile Phone:				
County:		Postcode:		e-mail:			
CURRENT DESCRIPTION							
Ethnic Appearance:			Build:				
1 White European	2 Dark European	3 Afro Caribbean	Fat	Stocky	Prop	Thin	Slight
4 Asian	5 Oriental	6 Arab	0 Unknown	Heavy	Broad	Medium	Slim Small
Height:		ft	inches or	cm	Shoe Size:		
Handed:		Left	Right	Ambi	Eyewear:		Glasses Contact Lenses Not Worn
Hair Type <i>(e.g. short, cropped)</i> :			Hair Colour:				
Hair Features:			Facial Hair:				
Eye Colour:			Accent <i>(local is not permitted)</i> :				
Complexion:			Sexuality:		Heterosexual Gay		
Dentures: Yes No Details:					Transgender		
Vehicle Possessed <i>(make / model / colour / VRM)</i> :							
Jewellery <i>(describe colours / features / inscriptions)</i> :							
Clothing <i>(describe colours / sizes / motifs / labels)</i> :							
Habits/Peculiarities:							
Warning:	Firearms	Weapons	Violent	Escaper	Mental Health Issues	Explosive	
Signals (PNC):	Self Harmer	Alleges	Contagious	Ailments	Suicidal	Drugs Male/Female Impersonator	
Identifying Marks <i>(scars / tattoos / piercing / dental / marks / peculiarities – describe their full type / location / description)</i> :							
OFFICER COMPLETING:		STATION:					
<i>(Name/Rank/No)</i>							

	Full Driving Licence (Y/N)
	Driving Licence Number:
Passport (Y/N).	
Country of Issue.	
Passport Number.	
Passport location: with misper / seized by Police / at another location/ unknown / other	
Mobile Phone No:	Mobile Network Provider:

REPORT DETAILS			
Date Reported:		Time Reported:	
Date Last Seen:		Time Last Seen:	
Last Seen By:		Incident Date:	
C & C Ref (OIS):		Log Date:	
Absent from:	Home	Private Care (residential care home)	Ward of Court
	Social Services (care)	MHA Patient (sectioned or voluntary)	Military Establishment
	School/Place of Work	Youth Custody	Detention
			Hospital
Crime Ref No:			
Social Authority: Worcestershire / Herefordshire/Shropshire/ Telford& the Wrekin			
Non West Mercia-Local Authority: Please specify			
Force: West Mercia Constabulary		Officer Dealing (forename):	
Division:		Officer Dealing (surname):	
Station Code: 22 / /		Officer Tel No:	
Publicity Authorised: Yes No		Authorised by:Inspector	

CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO DISAPPEARANCE	
Person's intentions when last seen? e.g. going to the shops, etc, and did they fail to complete their intentions?	
Did the person prepare for an absence? e.g. YES / NO (if YES, state details, i.e. take clothes, withdraw cash)	
Document enquiries that the informant has made/intends to make:	
1.	Location of Last Sighting:
2.	If the disappearance has been triggered by a family dispute/domestic situation please describe in detail:.....

OFFICER RECORDING TO TYPE IN DETAILS FROM FOLLOWING PAGES DIRECTLY ONTO COMPACT SYSTEM

SOCIAL CARE DETAILS		SOCIAL WORKER	
Social Services Authority:		Title: Mr/ Mrs / Ms	
Premises		Surname	
Street:		Forename	
Town;		Premises	
District:		Street	
County:		Town	
Postcode		District	
Phone Number:		County	
Email		Postcode	
		Phone Number	
		E- mail	

BANK DETAILS (if known)			
Bank name:		Account Type: Bank Account/ Building Society/ Credit Card	
Account Number:		Sort Code:	
Approx Balance:		Withdrawal limit:	
Branch:		Limit Type:	
Branch Contact:		Contact Number:	
Branch Address:		Statement address:	
BANK DETAILS (if known)			
Bank name:		Account Type: Bank Account/ Building Society/ Credit Card	
Account Number:		Sort Code:	
Approx Balance:		Withdrawal limit:	
Branch:		Limit Type:	
Branch Contact:		Contact Number:	
Branch Address:		Statement address:	

IMMEDIATE ACTION TAKENHouse Check Guidelines

This check should include all rooms, cupboards, loft(s), grounds and outbuildings. **This task must NOT be left to friends, relatives or carers.** Do not let others dictate the direction and extent of your checks. Clear the ground under your feet before extending.

Officers conducting this task should search for leads that may inform and determine the direction of the investigation. Such leads will include looking for any diaries, address books, mobile phones and medication belonging to the misper, together with itemised phone bills, records of financial matters including recent transactions and details of any vehicles to which they have access.

Where cases remain unresolved consideration should be given to repeat searches of the premises, this is particularly so in cases where outbuildings or sheds are present.

In cases where the misper has gone missing from an establishment (e.g. hospital, care home, nursing home or children's home) it may not always be possible for police officers to search the premises and grounds to the required standard immediately. In such cases officers should liaise with supervision and search to the extent deemed appropriate to the circumstances. In doing so it may be appropriate to utilise the services of the force helicopter and dog section. Staff from the establishment in question can be tasked with further searching. Details of any such search, the result and the member of staff in charge should be recorded.

If the case remains unresolved, serious consideration, taking account of the circumstances, should be given to a thorough police search of the establishment and grounds in question. Consultation with a PolSA missing persons search advisor is necessary.

House Check By:	Start Time:	End Time:
Result:		
Locality Check By:	Start Time:	End Time:
Result:		
Dog Handler Search By:	Start Time:	End Time:
Result:		

RELATIVES/ASSOCIATES TO BE CHECKED (Enter as ADDRESS CHECKS on COMPACT)

1. Name:	Tel No:	Relationship:
Address:		
2. Name:	Tel No:	Relationship:
Address:		
3. Name:	Tel No:	Relationship:
Address:		
4. Name:	Tel No:	Relationship:
Address:		
5. Name:	Tel No:	Relationship:
Address:		
6. Name:	Tel No:	Relationship:
Address:		

THIS PAGE ENDS THE OFFICER INPUT FROM MISSING REPORT ONTO COMPACT

**MISSING PERSON
SIGHTING REPORT**
COMPACT Intranet System

**Officer taking report must complete this form as fully as possible
before phoning input to CDU on:
0808 100 6564 or Ext 2208**

REPORT DETAILS

Date Reported:	Time Reported:
C & C Ref.(OIS):	Log Date:
Crime Ref. No.:	Force:
Division:	Station Code:

SIGHTING CIRCUMSTANCES

All sightings must be assessed by a supervisor who should confirm grading and decide if a task needs to be created.

Prompt Questions:

- a) Who was accompanying the misper?
- b) Vehicle involved?
- c) What were they doing?
- d) Where were they headed? Did they stop and speak? If so what was said?

Full Circumstances

.....

.....

.....

.....

R V TURNBULL 1976 IDENTIFICATION GUIDELINES

- A** Amount of time under observation 10 mins + / 2 – 10 mins / 1-2 mins / seconds
- D** Distance: less than 1 metre / 1-2 metres / 2-10 metres / 10-15 metres / 15-20 metres / more than 20 metres
- V** Visibility: Very Good / Medium / Low / Very Low. Details.....
- O** Obstructions: Not impeded / impeded .Details.....
- K** Known or seen before: Familiar/ Frequently met / Occasionally/ Not previously known.
- A** Any reason to remember/ YES/ NO Details.....
- T** Time lapse: Minutes/ Hrs/ day/ weeks Details.....
- E** Error or material discrepancy :None / Insignificant / Significant

CORROBORATION

Uncorroborated / Additional witness / CCTV Footage / Description matched.

SIGHTING RELIABILITY

Reliable / Suspect / Unknown

INFORMANT DETAILS

Title (<i>Mr/Mrs/Miss/etc</i>):	Forenames:
Surname:	Date Of Birth:
Premises: (Tick if as per misper's current home address): <input type="checkbox"/> (Tick if as per Next of Kin's current home address): <input type="checkbox"/>	Contact Phone No:
	Occupation:
	Place Of Work:
Street:	Phone No:

**MISSING PERSON
FOUND REPORT**
COMPACT Intranet System

Officer taking report must complete this form as fully as possible
before phoning input to CDU on:
0808 100 6564 or Ext 2208

REPORT DETAILS

Date Reported:	Time Reported:
C & C Ref.(OIS):	Log Date:
Crime Ref No:	Officer Dealing Forename:
Force:	Officer Dealing Surname:
Division: C/ D/ E/ F/ G Station Code 22	Officer Tel. No.:
Has the case been reported to Children Services YES / NO	
Date referred:	
Referred by:	

DEBRIEF *(Consider updating their description if there are significant differences i.e Hair / Tattoos, Scars, etc)*

Missing Voluntarily?	Lost or Injured?
Found At: Returned of own accord / Found at home address / Found at relatives address / Found elsewhere <i>Describe circumstances:</i>	
Found by: Family / Police / Carers / Other Persons / Arrested / Recovered Warrant MHA / Other <i>Describe circumstances:</i>	
Transport for return: Police provided / Carers provided / Not required / Ambulance provided <i>Describe circumstances:</i>	
Suffered Harm? Unharmd / Physical injury / Sex offence / Other crime / Abduction / Unexplained death / Murder / Parental abduction / Non-Parental abduction <i>(Describe circumstances):</i>	
Circumstances Whilst Missing: Slept rough / Stayed with friend / Met up with friend or acquaintance / Met up with other / With person or at location known from original information / Went to location – no known connections / Went to place previously lived or frequented / Stayed in hotel or other commercial premises / Misper refused or declined information / Not known / Other <i>Describe circumstances:</i>	
Criminal Activity: No crime committed / committed crime / involved in prostitution <i>Describe circumstances:</i>	
Time Spent Missing: Less than 24hrs / 24-48hrs / 3-5 days / More than 7 days <i>Give details:</i>	
Distance away from point missing: 0-5 miles / 6-10 miles / 11-20 miles / 21-40 miles / 41-80 miles / over 81 miles / out of UK <i>Give details:</i>	

THIS PAGE TO BE DETACHED AND GIVEN TO PERSON REPORTING

INFORMATION FOR THE FAMILY / PERSON REPORTING

We treat reports of missing people very seriously. Indeed, a considerable amount of our time and resources are devoted to trying to find people who go missing. In the course of our enquiries, there are many things Police have to consider, such as:

- The well being of the missing person.
- Respecting their right and freedom to go missing – some people simply do not wish to be found.
- The possibility that the missing person may be a victim of crime.
- Preservation and management of evidence in suspicious cases.
- Allocating appropriate levels of resources to the enquiry.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Members of staff will be appointed to supervise the enquiry and to keep in touch with relatives and friends.

WE WILL ...

- Inform you of the level of risk associated to the missing person.
- Search the home address of the missing person.
- Check other relevant places, e.g. work place, hospitals, and homes of friends and relatives.
- Keep you informed about the enquiry.
- Provide full details of how to keep in touch.
- Provide you with support appropriate to your needs.

HOW CAN YOU HELP THE POLICE?

There are many ways in which family, relatives and friends can help the Police locate a missing person. We value your suggestions on particular lines of enquiry and would encourage you to discuss with us the area where you believe you can help most. This may include:

- Keeping a diary to log your own efforts, information and questions. This will include a record of all searches that you have made along with communications with family, friends, acquaintances and agencies. This will be extremely helpful to share with the Police during the enquiry.
- Arranging with the charity “Missing People” to produce “free of charge” photograph posters of the missing person. These will carry the NMPH freephone telephone number on, and can be displayed where they will have the maximum impact, e.g. bus/railway stations. Any sightings that went to the Helpline would be passed onto the Police.
- We would encourage you to tell Police officers what you intend to do.

If you have any questions regarding our procedures or any particular concerns, do not hesitate to ask.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE MISSING PERSON TURNS UP AND SAFE AND WELL?

- **Firstly, please let us know immediately so that we can cancel the enquiry.**
- Once the missing person has been seen by a police officer who is able to confirm that the person is safe and well, the missing report will be cancelled.

WE WILL ...

- Inform interested parties that the person is safe and well.
- **Not** disclose the whereabouts of that person without their consent. However this may vary in certain circumstances, e.g. where due to age or infirmity.
- Interview the missing person for welfare reasons.
- Investigate any allegations of crime.

WHERE CAN OTHER SUPPORT COME FROM?

The charity “Missing People”

(Free phone 0500 700 700 or general office number 020 8392 4545, office fax 020 8878 7752)

www.missingpersons.org or e-mail photos@missingpersons.org

Their principle objective is to provide enduring and ongoing support for those who require it. Missing People attempts to make contact with missing people of all ages in order to assure others of their safety, reuniting them if appropriate and offering to act as an intermediary in difficult cases involving families and missing persons.

They aim to support the Police Service, recognising the Service’s primary role in finding missing people, and works in partnership with other government and non-government organisations.

WHO SHOULD I CONTACT?

Local Police Station:	Tel: 0300 333 3000, Ext:
Officer Attending:	Missing Person Case Ref:

OTHER USEFUL CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBERS FOR THE FAMILY

“Message Home“ is a confidential, national 24-hour Freephone Helpline for anyone aged 18 or over that is away from home.	Freephone 0500 700 700, www.missingpersons.org
“The Runaway Helpline” is a confidential, national, 24-hour Freephone Helpline for anyone aged 17 or under who has run away or been forced to leave home.	Freephone 0808 800 70 70
Re-unite Children abducted from the UK.	Advice line 0116 2556 234 Telephone 0116 2555 345

	www.reunite.org
Salvation Army Family Tracing Service	
“Parentline” is a UK registered charity offering support to anyone parenting a child.	
“International Tracing Service” is the joint initiative of 9 UK organisations, set up to make it easier for you to find help and advice on finding missing persons, and relatives with whom contact has been lost.	www.look4them.org.uk
“Samaritans” – this is the telephone helpline that provides free, confidential and emotional support.	
“UK Missing Kids Website” - 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	http://uk.missingkids.com/ 0808 100 8777
“Childline” - the free helpline for children and young people in the UK. Children and young people can call us on 0800 1111 to talk about any problem – their counsellors are always there	0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk
“Women's Aid” is the key national charity working to end domestic violence against women and children. We support a network of over 500 domestic and sexual violence services across the UK.	0808 2000 247 www.womensaid.org.uk
Refuge offer a free telephone 24-hour National Domestic Violence Helpline (run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge)	0808 2000 247 www.refuge.org.uk