



Haringey Council

Agenda item:

[No.]

Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee

On 20 October 2009

Report Title: Children Missing from Home and missing from Care

Forward Plan reference number (if applicable): **N/A**

Report of: **The Director of The Children and Young People's Service**

Wards(s) affected: **All**

Report for: **Information**

1. Purpose (That is, the decision required)

1.1 For information.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That members note the content of the report and endorse the action plan

Report Authorised by: Eleanor Brazil
Interim Deputy Director
The Children and Young People's Service

Contact Officer: Marion Wheeler – Head of Service Children in Care

Telephone: 020 8489 1084

E-mail: marion.wheeler@haringey.gov.uk

3. Director of Finance Comments

3.1 Not relevant to this report

4. Head of Legal Services Comments

5. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

5.1 The guidance referred to in 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 the guidance.

'Stepping Up' The Children's Society 2008.

6. Financial Implications

7. Equalities Implications

- 7.1 Children from deprived and disadvantaged backgrounds are over represented in the socio – demographic profile of children in care in the UK and in the care of Haringey council. Nationally the profile of children who run away from home and care is similarly profiled and runaways are over represented in the population of young adults who are homeless and serving prison sentences. This report highlights the critical importance of the work of the C&YPS, the LSCB and the Children’s partnership in understanding, preventing and reducing running from home and care by vulnerable children.

8. Background

- 8.1 In July 2009 the DCSF issued new statutory guidance on children who run away and go missing from home or care. The new guidance was developed to support local authorities to meet the requirements of National Indicator 71 – Missing from Home and Care. The terms ‘young runaway’ and ‘missing’ in this context refer to children and young people up to the age of 18 who have run away from their home or care placement, have been forced to leave, or whose whereabouts is unknown.
- 8.2 Research carried out by the Social Exclusion Unit Young Runaways (2002), found that the top reasons for running away are:

Push factors

- Problems at home – ranging from arguments with parents to long-term abuse or maltreatment.
- Family break-up – young people drawn into their parents’ conflicts are less likely to do well at school and more likely to truant or to run away from home.
- Mental health problems – a disproportionate number of young people who run away from home have mental health problem.
- Bullying – children who are being severely bullied are more likely to run away from school and home or care.
- Teenage pregnancy – some young women run away or are forced to leave home because they become pregnant (or fear that they may be pregnant). They may also be in denial about their pregnancy, meaning that they are not getting the advice they need about pregnancy options. There is also a greater risk of pregnancy when girls run away, and those working with them will need to ensure they have rapid access to confidential contraception and sexual health services to prevent unwanted pregnancies.

Pull factors

- Running to be near friends or family – especially when a young person is in care and there are problems in contact arrangements with family and friends.
- Grooming for potential sexual exploitation or child trafficking – young people may run away or go missing following grooming by adults who will seek to exploit them.

- 8.3 The Every Child Matters agenda states that children have the right to happy, healthy and safe childhoods that will prepare them for adult life. Vitally important in achieving this are effective interagency plans and protocols that support children and young people who go missing or decide to run away. Running away can be symptomatic of wider problems in a child or young person's life, but whatever the reason, one thing is very clear: children who decide to run away are unhappy, vulnerable and in danger. Research from The Children's Society report, *Stepping Up* (2008), states that as many as two-thirds of young people who run away are not reported to the police as missing, and even fewer as having run away. As well as short-term risks, there are also long-term implications. Nearly half of sentenced prisoners report having run away as children, and nearly half of homeless young people at Centrepont ran away as children.
- 8.4 In June 2008, the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families published the Young Runways Action Plan. The plan was developed after evidence from The Children's Society report 'Stepping Up', and findings from a series of hearings of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Children who Run Away or Go Missing, found that more needed to be done to support young people who run away from home.
- 8.5 The guidance replaces the Missing from Care and Home Guidance published by the Department of Health in 2002 and reflects developments across children's services, in particular the introduction of Targeted Youth Support (TYS), Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and the role of the Lead Professional and Team Around the Child (TAC). It also supports local authorities in meeting the requirements of National Indicator – Missing from Home and Care; this began in April 2009.

9. Local arrangements

- 9.1 Establishing strong communication networks between stakeholder agencies and practitioners in the locality will help ensure risk factors are identified early, and will lead to the completion of a CAF where necessary, will identify a child or young person's additional needs and which services are required to address the young person's needs. Effective joint-working by the local authority, police, health and voluntary sector partners, with monitoring by the LSCB overseeing strategic responsibility will enable us to build up good working agreements for the type of information to be collected to aid individual risk-assessment and for planning purposes.
- 9.2 The guidance sets out the need for local and regional Runaway and Missing from Home and Care protocols to be in place (referred to in the guidance as RMFHC protocols) especially for out-of-hours referrals. For Haringey this will include both adoption of the Pan London protocols and development of robust local arrangements.
- 9.3 All Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) and their partners in local

areas are required to take account of this guidance. Locally the arrangements for implementation of the new Missing Guidance is being mapped and monitored through the LSCB Quality Assurance sub Group. The Action plan for the Missing from Care and Home implementation will be presented to the November 2009 LSCB QA sub group for cross agency agreement. A copy of the action plan is attached at Appendix 1.

10. Data Collection

- 10.1 Collecting the right data at a local level is essential to driving improvements in services for young runaways. April 2009 saw the introduction of a new indicator in the national indicator set called 'Children Missing from Home and Care', this new data set tests out the extent to which local agencies have a picture of 'running' patterns in their area; how this information informs local service provision; and what procedures are in place to respond to the needs of young runaways.
- 10.2 Data collection and sharing is also important to understand the complete picture in relation to running away. Effective information sharing between agencies identifies criminal activity which is otherwise hidden, and similarly identifies how vulnerable some of these children are when they run away.

11. Conclusion

- 11.1 Implementation of the new statutory guidance on reducing risks and harm to children missing from care and home will embed into our overall work to safeguard children and ensure that agencies work collaboratively to gather and analyse data which will inform local provision and further development of effective operational responses.

APPENDIX 1 - Action Plan - NI71 Children missing from home and Care