



<b>Report for:</b>	Joint Corporate Parenting and Children's Safeguarding Policy and Practice Advisory Committee	<b>Item number</b>	
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<b>Title:</b>	<i>Children missing from care and home</i>
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<b>Report authorised by :</b>	Debbie Haith Deputy Director Children and Young People's Service
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<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Marion Wheeler Assistant Director Safeguarding 0208 489 1912 <a href="mailto:marion.wheeler@haringey.gov.uk">marion.wheeler@haringey.gov.uk</a>
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<b>Ward(s) affected: all</b>	<b>Report for Information</b>
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**1. Describe the issue under consideration**

This report is to inform members about children who go missing from care and missing from home, update them on statutory guidance and responsibility and inform them about the local Haringey context and actions being taken.

**2. Introduction**

**2.1** It is estimated that approximately 100,000 children and young people run away from home or care over night in the UK each year; 1 in 10 of these being under 11years of age and 8% stating they were harmed whilst they were away. Running is often a clear indicator that something is seriously wrong at home. Research and practice in the UK has shown that significant numbers of young people run away in response to serious problems at home, for example, neglect, abuse or family conflict.



**2.2** Of the estimated 100,000 children and young people who run away from home or care, one in six end up on the streets. A young person might run away from home or care for various reasons, but when they do so it usually means something in their life isn't going right. Furthermore, these young people face the particular range of risks that come from having to find alternative places to stay and the means to survive.

**2.3** It is the responsibility of local government and their partners to safeguard the young and vulnerable, including young runaways. This is normally done through the Local Children's Safeguarding Board.

Statutory guidance has been developed to help LA's put better systems in place to support young runaways from both home and care. The guidance, *Statutory guidance on children who run away and go missing from home or care*, emphasises the importance of young runaways being offered a return interview and stresses the importance of information sharing and using common assessment. It also explains the need for a named person to be responsible at a local level.

### **3. Recommendations**

Elected members consider and note the contents of the report

### **4. Update – The Miss U Project**

**4.1** The London Investment Programme has brought together a partnership of Aviva, the Railway Children project and Barnardos to make available £300,000 over the next 3 years to 3 London local authorities to improve the quality of preventive and direct work that can be undertaken with children and young people placing themselves at risk by going missing from care or from home.

The local authorities involved in the partnership, to be known as the '**Miss U Project**' will be Islington, Camden and Haringey. The project will fund the set up of a new team of staff employed through Barnardos and based part time in Barnardos and part time in each of the 3 host authorities.

**4.2** Haringey has significant numbers of children reported missing each year and this is an important area of our work; these are children in care to Haringey, in care to other local authorities but placed in homes or foster homes in borough and children going missing from home.

A London Steering group has been put in place to oversee the development and implementation of the project; service objectives and outcomes are currently being developed to ensure we achieve maximum



impact and learning across the 3 local authorities and the third sector partners.

Our Haringey key objectives and outcomes are that we reduce the levels of harm for children who experience a 'missing' episode, that we enable children and young people to develop safety strategies, that we are able to improve parent/ carer/ child relationships and that 'missing' episodes are reduced. The project had a lead in set up time of approximately 3 months and the target date for operation is autumn 2011. The work will include direct outreach work with children and young people, joint work with partner LSCB agencies and outreach and education work to schools.

**4.3** The London Miss U Scheme has been developed through the Aviva 'Streets to School' Programme with the 'Railway Children' Charity and Barnardo's who will work with Camden, Islington and Haringey Children's Services to promote and improve the protection of young people who go missing and who may be at risk of harm, by increasing early identification of risk, developing partnerships and securing a co-ordinated inter-agency response. This will include a drop-in service for young people, a prevention education programme and training for professionals to raise awareness.

**4.4** A young person missing is difficult to define and often means different things to different people. The Missing Young Person's Scheme defines missing as:-

*A child or young person under the age of 18 who is spending time away from their home or placement without the permission of their parent or carer, or has been forced to leave their family home or who does not wish to return. A young person who is absent from their home or placement without permission for any length of time and where their age and experience; background or ability makes their absence a cause for concern.*

Not all incidents of being absent from home or care can be categorised as being Missing. Other incidents can include: - unauthorised absence, absconding, abduction.

Haringey is excited to be part of this new Service and will have a Barnardo's worker supporting social workers and managers, located in our First Response Service.

The worker will be part of the multi-agency team Screening Team and will work directly with children and young people who are referred to First Response because of concerns about them going missing.

The worker will:-



- Help to prevent children and young people from running away
- Safeguard children and young people who go missing
- Educate children and young people on the risks of going missing
- Raise awareness for professionals through training
- Provide a drop-in service/safe space for children and young people who go missing
- Exchange information between Barnardo's and Camden, Islington and Haringey Social Services about children and young people (12-17) who go missing from home and care.

## **5. Background information**

### **5.1 Overall Haringey context**

Police Missing Persons Unit in Haringey confirm that for the 12 months (01/06/10 - 31/05/11) they received 2455 reports for missing children.

A significant proportion of these will be children who are late back from school or an activity and will have been properly notified to police by worried parents.

A second significant number will be those children in the care of other Local authorities who are placed in Haringey private and voluntary care homes or foster placements.

The numbers of children in Haringey care who go missing are set out below at 5.2.

The numbers of children and young people who go missing from home and who do not return within a 24 hour period in Haringey are relatively small but are of concern to agencies engaged in safeguarding. We have received 7 notifications of children missing from home for a 24 hour period in the first 6 months of this year.

### **5.2 Children missing / absconding from care between April and 19/9/11**

Between April and mid September 2011, 51 different children have either gone missing from care (away from care for more than 24 hours without consent) or had periods of unauthorised absence/absconded (on one or more occasions)

22 children were reported as missing from care for more than 24 hours in the period and 3 of these also had several periods of unauthorised absence. 2 are still reported as missing from care. Both are aged 16.

### **Legal Status of children missing/absconding since April 2011**



Interim Care Order	14
Full Care Order	18
Voluntary Care	18
On Remand	1

**Placement of children when they go missing/abscond**

Placement type	In Borough	Out of borough
Agency Foster Care	0	12
Residential Homes	11	N/A
Task-Centred foster care	2	0
Placed at home	1	0
Semi-independent	6	5
Residential	4	10

**Some reasons why children are reported as ‘Unauthorised absence’ from care**

- Not returned to placement after curfew time set by carers
- Staying with family members where their whereabouts are known but it is inappropriate for them to remain there
- Staying out overnight but considered to be ‘low risk’.

**Details of children who are still missing from care @ 26/9/11**

- Child A – went missing from care in June. She is part of a large extended Roma Gypsy family where other family members have gone missing and returned. Police are still actively trying to locate her.
- Child B – Went missing from care in June. There have been reports that he has tried to leave the country and UKBA have been notified. He is an unaccompanied Minor.

**6. Financial Implications**

The ‘MISS – U’ Project is funded through an external partnership with no additional costs to the authority.



The employees associated with the scheme are employed by Barnardo's and there are therefore no employment issues for the Council when the funding for the project ceases.

## **7. Legal Implications**

This guidance was issued in July 2009 under Section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 which means that except in exceptional circumstances the local authority must act in accordance with it.

The "Statutory guidance on children who run away and go missing from home or care" serves to safeguard **all** runaways and to redress the imbalance that currently exists between services offered to runaways from the looked after children population and those who run away from home.

The Children's Society report *Stepping Up* found that half of local authorities surveyed had no protocol for managing cases of children missing from home however nearly 93 per cent had protocols for children missing from care.

This statutory guidance is supplementary to *Working Together to Safeguard Children* and should be read in conjunction with that statutory guidance because a swift and effective response for when a young person runs away is seen by the government as a key element not just in safeguarding young people but also in the link with work to raise their aspirations and improve their life chances.

## **8. Equalities and Community Cohesion Comments**

Children and young people who go missing are already amongst our most vulnerable and are then at risk of increased vulnerability through going missing. The risks are those of missing out on educational opportunities leading to further disadvantage, increased exposure to drug and alcohol misuse, increased risk of sexual exploitation, increased risk of early or unplanned pregnancy, increased risk of homelessness in older young people, increased risk of involvement in gang and criminal activity. The children who go missing and run are from all sections of our community.

## **9. Head of Procurement Comments**

## **10. Policy Implications**

## **11. Use of Appendices**



**Haringey** Council

- **Missing from Care Action Plan**
- **First Response Missing Protocol**

## **12. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**