



**Haringey** Council

Agenda item:

<b>Report for:</b>	Cabinet – 10 <sup>th</sup> July 2012	<b>Item number</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	Service Response to the Scrutiny Review of Children Missing from Care and Home		
<b>Report Authorised by :</b>	Libby Blake, Director for the Children and Young People's Service  Signed : <u>Libby Blake</u>		
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Debbie Haith, Deputy Director, Children and Families E-mail: debbie.haith@haringey.gov.uk		
<b>Ward(s) affected: All</b>	<b>Non-key</b>		

**1. Describe the issue under consideration**

To set out the response of Children's Services to Scrutiny Review of Children Missing from Care and From Home

**2. Cabinet Member introduction**

This was a useful and constructive report and the response makes it clear that all the recommendations are accepted where the implementation will not require additional resources. Overall I believe the actions taken to implement the recommendations will improve the service we are able to offer children who go missing, their families and carers. The one recommendation, for all children to be offered an independent return home interview, for which extra resources would be required is agreed in principle and the Service will now investigate with partners and national agencies how best such a scheme might be achieved.

### 3. Recommendations

That Cabinet agrees the response as contained in Appendix A.

### 4. Other options considered

NA

### 5. Background information

5.1 The committee commissioned a review of Children Missing from Care and from Home. The review was set up as a result of a recommendation from the Scrutiny Review of Corporate Parenting and in response to concerns that were raised in respect of missing children. It focused three specific categories of missing children and young people:

- children missing from the Council's care
- children missing from the care of other local authorities who have been placed in Haringey
- children missing from home.

5.2 The review noted the differences that exist in practices and procedures for dealing with these different categories and which reflect their different circumstances.

#### *Terms of Reference*

5.3 The Terms of Reference for the review were as follows:

"To consider how the Council and its partners respond to instances where children or young people run away from home and from the Council's care and, in particular, its policies, procedures, practices and performance".

5.4 In undertaking the review, the Panel considered:

- Research documentation, national guidance and targets;
- Statistical evidence including relevant performance data and benchmarking;
- Comparison with other areas such as statistical neighbours; and
- Interviews with a range of stakeholders.

5.5 Evidence received from a range of stakeholders, including:

- Haringey Children and Young People's Service;
- First Response Team;
- Police Missing Persons Unit;
- Barnardo's MissU Project;
- Residential care providers and private fostering agencies; and foster carers.

5.6 The views of Children and Young People will continue to be sought and have been represented by feedback from the Barnardo's MissU Project, foster carers and the Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Children's Rights Project commissioned from Barnardo's.

## **6. Comments of the Chief Finance Officer and financial implications**

In general terms all of the proposed management responses, associated with the recommendations set out in the action plan, would be accommodated within existing resources. The possibility of additional commissioned work to enable independent return reviews, as described in Action 11 may have additional financial implications which would infer a re-prioritisation of resources within the service.

## **7. Head of Legal Services and legal implications**

7.1 The Action Plan for implementing the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of Corporate Parenting accords with the national and London statutory guidance.

7.2 It may be necessary for the local authority to take extra measures to ensure that the missing child is effectively safeguarded by consideration of the legal options available, particularly where the person with parental responsibility does not co operate with the safeguarding measures.

7.3 The Authority can apply to the court for a range of orders including a recovery order under Section 50 of the Children Act 1989 or where the child's location is unknown there is an alternative Collection Order that can be sought at the High Court. This confers on the court Tipstaff additional powers ( in liaison with police) to ascertain a child's whereabouts and those of connected persons.

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

8.1 The Council has a public sector equality duty under S149 of the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to need to amongst other things:

- tackle discrimination and victimisation of persons that share the characteristics protected under S4 of the Act.
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share those protected characteristics and people who do not;
- foster good relations between people who those characteristics and people who do not.
- all s149 protected characteristics, namely age, disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation are reflected the cohort of children and Young People missing from care and from home in Haringey.

8.2 The Scrutiny recommendations set out and accepted in the appendix to this report address the safety of looked-after children and young people and are designed to improve policies, procedures, practice and performance in respect of those of them missing from care and homes. These measures satisfy the second element of S149 duty (by improving opportunity for their safety). There are no apparent implications for the first and third elements of the duty (tackling discrimination ---- and fostering good relations).

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

NA

## 10. Policy Implication

NA

## 11. Use of Appendices

Action Plan for implementing the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of Corporate Parenting

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

London Procedure for Safeguarding Children Missing from Care and Home – London Child Protection Committee (March 2006)

Beyond Refuge; Supporting Young Runaways – NSPCC

Missing in London: Meeting the Needs of Young People who Run Away – Barnardo's Policy and Research Unit (August 2006)

A Report on the Young Runaways Situation in London for GoL – ECOTEC Research and Consulting (February 2010)

Children and Young People Missing from Home and Care – Report to Vulnerable Children Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Birmingham City Council (July 2011)

Missing from Care in Staffordshire; A Report prepared by Barnardo's for Staffordshire Children and Lifelong Learning Directorate – Di McNeish and Sara Scott

Missing from Care, Missing from Home Joint Protocol and Practice Guidance – Haringey LSCB

Still Running: Children on the Streets in the UK – Safe on the Streets Research Team (1999)

Make Runaways Safe; Launch Report – The Children's Society (July 2011)

Supporting Young People Who Run Away or Go Missing; A briefing for Lead Members for Children's Services – DCSF

Statutory Guidance on Children who Run Away and Go Missing for Home or Care; Supporting Local Authorities to Meet the Requirements of National Indicator 71 – Missing from Care and Home – DCSF (July 2009)

Young Runaways Action Plan – DCSF (June 2008)

Children Missing from Care: Good Practice in Residential Care – NCERCC

Young Runaways – Social Exclusion Unit (2002)

## Appendix 1

### Action Plan for implementing the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of Corporate Parenting

No	Recommendation	Response	Commentary
1	That the Council continue to monitor and report progress in supporting and protecting young runaways through the use of National Indicator 71 (paragraph 3.11).	Agreed	<p>The Quality Assurance sub group of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board will review the criterion for the self assessment required for this indicator and set out how it will be reported to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB).</p> <p><b>Lead: Debbie Haith</b></p> <p>When the charter is published it will be presented to the Cabinet Member for Children to consider on behalf of the Council.</p>
2	That, when available, the Council give specific consideration to signing up to the Children's Society's runaways charter (3.13).	Agreed	<p><b>Lead: Debbie Haith</b></p> <p>The QA sub group will monitor as part of their QA role of the safeguarding dataset and data and commentary will be included in the LSCB annual report.</p>
3	That, in order to enhance monitoring of progress, action in respect of children missing from both home and from care to be included within the LCSB Annual Report (5.5).	Agreed	<p><b>Lead: Angela Bent</b></p> <p>In line with the London Safeguarding Board Procedures and as set out in the missing from care protocol any unauthorised absence in excess of 24 hours is reported to the Head of Service. For all children and young people where there is a history of going missing or who are likely to have unauthorised absences a risk assessment takes place at the point of placement and a plan developed. This plan is reviewed at the Placement Planning meeting which takes place within 5 days of the placement and at subsequent Looked After Child reviews.</p> <p><b>Lead: Debbie Haith</b></p>
4	That the Council consider, in consultation with partners, the setting of a finite time limit for unauthorised absences of children and young people (5.15).	Agreed	<p><b>Lead: Debbie Haith</b></p>

5	<p>That the Children and Young People's Service, the Police and other relevant partners work together to explore how data and statistical information on missing children and young people can be better consolidated electronically and quality improved. (5.20).</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>The implementation of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub provides the opportunity to review how data is gathered and shared. All children missing from home are logged centrally on FWI and a report run weekly. This information is passed to the Barnardos MissU worker for action.</p>
6	<p>That risk assessments are updated automatically and as a matter of routine whenever children or young people go missing (5.29).</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p><b>Lead: Sylvia Chew</b></p> <p>Protocol requires that Risk assessments must be placed on file at the beginning of each child or young person's placement. This includes relevant information regarding their current contacts, whether or not their social relationships have changed and what new risks might therefore be present.</p> <p>A strategy meeting is arranged as soon as the Young Person is reported missing with the Police Missing Person' Unit and a joint professional assessment undertaken of the risks to the young person with a clear plan, which includes the individual roles and responsibilities of those involved in the recovery of the young person</p>
7	<p>That C&amp;YPS work with foster carers to develop improved information sharing where there is a high risk of a young person going missing through the use of a suitable pro forma to record the information necessary to assist the Police, including provision of a recent photograph (6.18).</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p><b>Lead: Chris Chalmers</b></p> <p>The service has worked with foster carers and the provider forum, which has representatives from the Independent agencies and police missing persons unit, to review the information that is shared when a young person is reported missing. A flowchart for staff guidance has been produced and a proforma to gather information which includes a photo of the child, these are available to</p>

			<p>staff and foster carers.</p> <p><b>Lead: Wendy Tomlinson</b></p> <p>The missing form care and home procedure has been updated to reflect the expectation that social workers contact children/young people and carers when the child/young person returns following an absence with out permission or missing episode. A series of work shops focusing on working with children who are at risk of going missing is being developed and the programme will be delivered during October and November 2012 to support staff and carers in their understanding of the issues and procedures.</p>
8	<p>That action be taken to improve support for foster carers after children or young people in their care have returned after going missing and, as part of this, all incidents be followed up by social workers to provide reassurance for carers that the situation is being monitored and, where appropriate, action being taken.(6.24).</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p><b>Lead: Wendy Tomlinson</b></p> <p>Where children and Young People have been reported missing by day time services a referral is completed, out of hours services alerted and plan for return placed on the Young Person child's file. When the Young Person is returned all appropriate lead agencies are informed by either the out of hours service or the day time worker.</p> <p>Currently all calls to the Out of Hours Service are initially received by Haringey's call handling centre Vangent. This inevitably results in some duplication of information.</p>
9	<p>The Panel recommends that work be undertaken with the out of hours service provider to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all reports of missing children or young people are followed up appropriately and foster carers are kept informed of progress; and</li> <li>• information is appropriately recorded and accessible to operatives so that callers do not need to fully repeat details of incidents that have previously been reported (6.25).</li> </ul>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p><b>Lead: Sylvia Chew</b></p> <p>The LSCB and the LADO and staff from CYPs work with the designated teacher network and faith groups to raise awareness of safeguarding issues. The issues relating to missing children and</p>
10	<p>That the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) within C&amp;YPS works with schools and, in particular, the faith community to raise the profile of the issue, including training for</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	

11	<p>designated teachers (7.11).</p> <p>That action is taken to confirm that all children and young people who go missing from care and from home are offered an independent return home interview on the basis outlined in the pan London procedures, with any shortfall identified met through the commissioning by C&amp;YPS of additional capacity from an appropriate third sector organisation and that this be subject to regular monitoring and evaluation to ensure its cost effectiveness.</p>	<p>Agreed in principle</p>	<p>their role in reducing risk for these young people will be highlighted in future events.</p> <p><b>Lead: Rachel Oakley</b></p> <p>The London procedures recommend that: <i>The child must receive the interview with the independent person within 72 hours of being located or returning from absence</i> The independent person could be a social worker other than the child's social worker, if they have one, or a teacher, school nurse, Connexions, Youth or YOT Worker, a voluntary sector practitioner or a police officer whom the child knows and trusts. The independent interview should be with someone the child trusts and who is separate from the police and children's social services interview. The child should be asked who they wish to speak to.</p> <p>For looked after children it is the responsibility of children's services to ensure that an independent interview is offered, for children living in the community it the responsibility of the police and children's services.</p> <p>Police Missing Person's Unit meet with all Young People who have been returned following an episode of being missing. This interview includes a face to face meeting with the missing person and an exploration of the reasons for absence are explored to include potential risk from others. Local procedures will be reviewed with partner agencies and with Youth and Community Partnership to ensure that were appropriate an interview with an independent person is offered to</p>
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12	<p>That residential care providers be requested to confirm that arrangements are in place for all Haringey children who are placed out-of-borough and go missing to receive an independent interview (8.20).</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>a young person.</p> <p><b>Lead: Debbie Haith</b></p> <p>Where children and Young People are placed out of borough the arrangements reflect to protocol and arrangements of the Local Authority in which they are living. Providers forums are held to ensure compliance with this.</p>
13	<p>That C&amp;YPS should seek to gain a greater understanding of the 'push' factors behind running away from Council care and seek to develop and deliver a strategy to address them. (8,21)</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p><b>Lead: Wendy Tomlinson</b></p> <p>Tighter monitoring of the effectiveness of placements is contributing to a far more cohesive approach to tackle issues which might cause young people to run away from Council care. Incidences of unauthorised absence are much more likely where a young person is not engaged with their carers and additionally feels a strong sense of connection to their birth family or other significant social contacts.</p> <p>Current joint approaches involve IROs, the placements team, foster or residential carers and the social work team with case responsibility for the young person. The use of an independent interview process on the young person's return to care assists in providing a fuller picture of the motivating factors behind their desire to get away from their placement. There are comprehensive local and national procedures which underpin this work.</p> <p><b>Lead: Chris Chalmers</b></p>

