



Haringey Council

Report for:	Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee Children's Safeguarding Policy and Practice Committee Date 29 <sup>th</sup> October 2012	Item Number:	
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Title:	<b>The Runaways Charter</b>
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Ward(s) affected: All	Report for Key/Non Key Decision:
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## 1. Introduction

1.1 A scrutiny review of children missing from care and from home was carried out in Haringey and reported to Cabinet in July 2012. One of the recommendations from the review was:

That, when available, the Council give specific consideration to signing up to the Children's Society's runaways charter (recommendation 3.13).

1.2 The Children's Society launched the [Runaways Charter](#) on 12 July 2012, as part of their 'Make Runaways Safe' campaign. The Children's Society is calling on all local authorities to sign up to the Charter, which contains a clear code for agencies with a duty to protect children who run away or go missing from home and care. The charter is attached at Appendix A.

1.3 The following authorities have already pledged to adopt the Charter:

- Reading
- Kent
- Staffordshire
- Derbyshire
- Leicestershire
- East Riding of Yorkshire
- Lancashire
- Manchester City

However as the Charter was only published in July the implications of making the pledge are not yet clear.

## 2. **Recommendations**

That the joint committees note the commitments of the Charter and considers whether they are appropriate for Haringey.

## 3. **Background**

3.1 The term 'runaway' refers to a child under the age of 16 who has spent one night or more away from their home without parental permission. They may have decided to leave home or have been forced to leave, and they will face a range of potential harm and risks from having to find a place to stay and a way to survive. A child aged 16 or over can leave home and live independently so is not considered to have run away.

3.2 But all children under 18 are subject to statutory safeguards as set out in the Children Act 1989. Consequently the definition used by the government in its guidance states: '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.' Within the context of children in care the Council has corporate parenting responsibilities.

3.3 In 2009 the then Government introduced national indicator 71 which required authorities to self-assess the progress they were making to protect and support runaways. The indicator was scrapped by the Government in 2010 and it is now at the discretion of local authorities to decide which (if any) targets to keep in place. In a range from 0 to 3 (low to high), local authorities provided a self-evaluation score in each of the following areas:

- Local information about running away is gathered
- Local Needs Analysis, based on gathered information, is in place
- Local procedures to meet the needs of runaways agreed
- Protocols for responding to urgent/out of hours referrals from police or other agencies are in place
- Local procedures include effective needs assessment protocols, to support effective prevention /intervention work.

Haringey self-scored mainly at level 2 when this indicator was last used. Since the Coalition Government scrapped this indicator it is no longer used by Haringey.

- 3.4 There remains in place a number of existing guidance and protocols for responding to children missing from home or from care placements, which Haringey currently adheres to. They include:
- [Statutory guidance](#) on children who run away or go missing from home or care which was issued by Government in July 2009 and is still extant. This guidance is published to help local authorities provide the best possible support for children who feel they need to run away, wherever they run from, by highlighting some of the good practice that already exists. It draws out the particular requirements related to responding to children who run away and go missing from care, as they are overrepresented in missing person's reports.
  - [Pan London Missing from Home and Care Procedure](#). This procedure supports an effective collaborative safeguarding response from all agencies involved when a child goes missing.
  - Ofsted have recently (October 2012) published a report from the Children's Rights Director for England, '[Running Away](#)' on the views of children running away from care placements. While this is not statutory or non-statutory guidance, it contains useful suggestions for responding to the needs of missing children.
- 3.5 However in the absence of the national indicator, the Children's Society's Runaways Charter could provide a useful code of practice for local authorities to work towards.
- 3.6 The Children's Society is not the only organisation supporting children who have run away. Barnado's and Railway Children both provide this support and are working in Haringey through the Miss U project. This provides services to support runaways and children at risk on the streets in Haringey, Islington and Camden, funded by Aviva.
- 3.7 It does not appear that Barnado's or Railway Children have produced their own charters. The Children's Society charter appears to be the only one.
- 3.8 Signing up to the Charter:
- Would give the Council and its partners a clear focus regarding work to support children who are missing or have run away
  - Would demonstrate that the Council was being proactive in this work
  - May help to provide an improved support service to children who are missing or have run away in Haringey
- 3.9 However signing up to the Charter would also mean Haringey is making a pledge to fulfil the Charter's commitments. These have been listed in appendix B for ease of reference. The Charter is not a statutory document, but it is possible that having made a pledge to the Charter it could be used in assessments during inspections. Haringey could also be a focus for other local authorities considering making a pledge requesting advice and information on how we have responded to the Charter.

#### **4 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

Scrutiny Review – Children Missing from Care and from Home. A Review by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee April 2012

## APPENDIX A: The Runaways' Charter

# THE RUNAWAYS' CHARTER



\_\_\_\_\_ has committed to:

### Count

We have a clear picture of the numbers of all children running away or going missing from care or home in our area, and regularly analyse the data to look for trends and hotspots.

### Think

We address the problems of identifying and responding to children who run away in key strategy documents, such as the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Local Safeguarding Children Board plans and other strategic plans for young people set out by the local authority.

Our Local Safeguarding Children Board has a set of protocols for preventing running away and dealing with incidents when they occur. There is a named person with responsibility for coordinating responses to runaways and missing children and young people.

We make sure that every professional who works to prevent repeated running away and responds to children and young people who run away, has a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities.

### Act

We make available to children and young people, professionals, parents and carers, information on the risks of running away as well as information on 'safe places' where runaways can seek support.

Our agencies recognise that young people of 15, 16 and 17-years-old are not adults and should receive a response to keep them safe, just as younger children do.

### Prevent

Our agencies work together and work with parents and carers to prevent repeat instances of running away.

We understand that running away is an indicator of need and requires appropriate responses from local agencies, including a police safe and well check and independent return interview. If a child runs away more than once there should be a presumption that they are at risk of significant harm which requires an appropriate response, such as a multi-agency risk management meeting.



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children who run away from home

Charity registration No. 221124

[makerunawayssafe.org.uk](http://makerunawayssafe.org.uk)

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# THE RUNAWAYS' CHARTER



## How runaways should be treated:

### *Be understanding, calm and relaxed with us*

Don't automatically think we have been 'wasting your time' or have done something wrong. Children and young people can run away for a number of reasons, including abuse, neglect and grooming for child sexual exploitation. Young people are more likely to open up and allow you to help if you treat us with respect and understanding.

### *Help us trust you and don't judge us*

We need a person that we can trust, that listens and doesn't judge - body language is important. It is important to develop trusting relationships - we might be in danger, but we may not feel able to tell you about it if we don't trust you to listen without judgment.

### *Be straightforward and honest with us*

Where the law stops you from keeping things confidential, explain this to us and involve us in the process of sharing information. Be honest with us about what information you are sharing, why you are doing it and who you are sharing it with - we want to know what's being said and to whom.

### *Listen to us and take us seriously*

Please listen to what we tell you and don't assume you know the facts about a situation until you have heard us. Support us when we come to you and talk about what is happening.

### *Explain things to us. Give us choices and don't force us into making decisions that we don't understand*

Take the time to explain to us the reasons why we need to do certain things, such as attend school, rather than simply telling us that we have to. We need to understand the benefits of doing something, rather than simply being threatened with the consequences of not doing it.

### *Show us respect*

If you need to cancel a meeting, tell us why and rearrange to see us.



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## APPENDIX B: Runaways' charter commitments

	Haringey evidence
<b>Count</b>	
We have a clear picture of the numbers of all children running away or going missing from care or home in our area	
We regularly analyse the data to look for trends and hotspots	
<b>Think</b>	
We address the problems of identifying and responding to children who run away in key strategy documents, such as the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Local Safeguarding Children Board Plans and other strategic plans for young people set out by the local authority	
Our LSCB has a set of protocols for preventing running away and dealing with incidents when they occur	
There is a named person with responsibility for coordinating responses to runaways and missing children and young people	
We make sure that every professional who works to prevent repeated running away and responds to children and young people who run away has a clear understanding of their responsibilities	
<b>Act</b>	
We make available to children and young people, professionals, parents and carers, information on the risks of running away as well as information on 'safe places' where runaways can seek support	
Our agencies recognise that young people of 15, 16 and 17-year olds are not adults and should receive a response to keep them safe, just as younger children do	
<b>Prevent</b>	
Our agencies work together and work with parents and carers to prevent repeat instances of running away	
We understand that running away is an indicator of need and require appropriate responses from local agencies, including a police safe and well check and independent return review	
If a child runs away more than once there should be a presumption that they are at risk of significant harm which requires an appropriate response, such as a multi-agency risk management meeting	

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