

Report for: Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee: 4 April 2016

Item number:

Title: Missing Children – Key Factors Involved. The Multiple Risks Associated with Children who are Missing



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Ward(s) affected: NA

Report for Key/
Non Key Decision: Non Key

1. **Describe the issue under consideration**
Missing Children – Key Factors Involved. The Multiple Risks Associated With Children Who Are Missing

2. **Background information**

Context
 - 2.1 The exact number of children who are missing from home and care each year is unclear as the criteria for recording varies. However, it has been estimated that approximately 140,000 children and young people nationally under the age of 18 are missing from home or care each year.

2.2 In Haringey the numbers for the past three months were:

Dec 2015

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|--|----|
| Children missing from home | 17 |
| Children missing from placement | 9 |
| Children away from placement without authorisation | 7 |

Jan 2016

| | |
|--|----|
| Children missing from home | 31 |
| Children missing from placement | 16 |
| Children away from placement without authorisation | 6 |

Feb 2016

| | |
|--|----|
| Children missing from home | 15 |
| Children missing from placement | 13 |
| Children away from placement without authorisation | 3. |

2.3 **Missing from Home**

When children and young people are missing from home there is a briefing on their return carried out either by the police MISPA Team or the police officer who has recovered them. There is no clear data as to reasons why children and young people go missing, other than general headings such as they are unhappy at home, there have been interpersonal relationship difficulties with their carers or other family members, or they have been encouraged, or groomed to leave home by those who exploit vulnerable children. This may include radicalisation, or sexual exploitation, which is also linked to being trafficked to different areas for the purposes of prostitution and or drug dealing where the child is used to transport drugs across the UK. There are several established routes which traverse county boundaries, for example: London – Wrexham, Hull, Southampton, and Norwich. Integral to this is that they are also vulnerable to gang and criminal activity which is associated with a chaotic lifestyle which has implications for their sexual, physical and emotional health.

2.4 **Missing From Care**

The Report from The Joint Inquiry Into Children Who Go missing From Care (2012) was precipitated by the incidents of organised Child Sexual Exploitation which took place in various parts of the UK and highlighted the vulnerability of looked after children. The report indicated that the reasons for absconding from care often relates to: being unhappy; feeling that the placement was not meeting their needs; bullying in the placement; not feeling listened to; or they have been encouraged or groomed to leave the placement by those who exploit vulnerable children and young people. As with those young people missing from home (above) this may include radicalisation, child sexual exploitation for the purposes of prostitution and or drug dealing where the child is used to transport drugs across the UK.

2.5 Summary

In conclusion the risk factors for both groups are similar as they are often disaffected and therefore vulnerable to those who wish to exploit them.

2.6 Action taken to Identify and Reduce Risk

2.6.1 When children are missing from care there is an established protocol, which includes a referral to the Police MISPA Team, and a strategy meeting at which information is shared and action planned. There is a weekly tracking meeting of children who are, or have been missing from care, between the DCS and Lead Member. On their return to care, a de-briefing interview is undertaken by the police MISPA Team in order to ascertain the reason behind the missing episode. From a CYPS perspective a Return To Care Interview is undertaken by the Targeted Support Team. Performance has been poor in this area and a contract with an external provider has been negotiated.

2.6.2 Multi-agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE)

The MASE meeting convenes on a monthly basis and its key purpose is to produce and develop a detailed strategic overview of the CSE profile for the borough of Haringey. The CSE profile will enable the MASE meeting to coordinate tactical responses to direct diversionary and disruption measures in identified problem areas.

2.6.3 Professionals are expected to work collaboratively with all agencies to ensure the safeguarding and welfare of children and young people who are being or are at risk of being sexually exploited. Linked to this the multi-agency group will be pro-active in problem-solving in order to address the risks associated with victims, perpetrators and locations and ensure the safeguarding and welfare of children and young people who or who may be at risk from sexual exploitation. Partner agencies, such as the police, share intelligence and information relating to CSE activity to inform mapping, analysing the profile of CSE in the borough, generating intelligence for investigations and identifying any trends or problem locations to ensure they are dealt with. This is to provide a strategic overview of the CSE profile in Haringey in order to enable local diversionary measures to disrupt activity and prosecute where possible.

2.6.4 More recently the Missing Children and Child Exploitation Operational Panel has begun meeting every three weeks. This is a multi-agency forum which has the purpose of agreeing multi-agency safety plans for children who are missing/engaging in risk-taking behaviour which is escalating their vulnerability and risk from all forms of exploitation. The remit is as follows:

Missing Children

- Identify and share details of children and young people who are missing / frequent MISPERs
- Identify potential risks and risk level, including those at risk of youth offending
- Prioritise intervention

- Agree agency or multi agency responses required to support an agreed safety plan based on level of risk identified by Panel.

Child Sexual Exploitation

- Identify and share details of children and young people who are at risk of child sexual exploitation and are known to professionals as missing / frequent MISPERs
- Agree agency or multi agency responses where required.

Gang Affiliation

- Identify and share details of children and young people who are at risk of gang affiliation and are known to professionals as missing / frequent MISPERs
- Agree agency or multi agency responses where required.

Radicalisation and Extremist Ideology

- Identify and share details of children and young people who are considered at risk of Radicalisation and Extremist Ideology and are known to professionals as missing / frequent MISPERs
- Agree agency or multi agency responses where required.

Young People Approaching Adulthood

- Identify missing / Frequent MISPERs approaching 18 years old who are considered to be at ongoing risk from exploitation / safeguarding issues as they enter adulthood. Concerns to be Passed to Adult Safeguarding Services.

The format and purpose of the meeting is to be re viewed every twelve weeks.

3. Contribution to strategic outcomes

Priority 1 - Enable every child and young person to have the best start in life, with high quality education.