

Management of Missing Children Including the Weekly Missing Meeting Children's Social Care, Early Help and Education

1. The MASH is responsible for the receipt of all police contacts through Merlins and this includes all reports of children or young people missing from home or from care.
2. If there is a missing person report to the police from an educational establishment this would also be referred into the MASH by the police through a Merlin.
3. Schools require a process in line with the Children Missing Education Statutory Guidance for local authorities¹ The Head of Service for Inclusion, SEN Schools to ensure this protocol/procedure is in place and available on the LSCB website.
4. Thriving families to have a process in place to follow up on those children where the risk is assessed to be lower than the threshold for services from children's social care. This should include a method of conducting or ensuring return to home interviews are being completed by an independent person.
5. The MASH are able to track all Merlins that have been received regarding children who are missing and this information will be held on a central tracker. (<file:///N:/Directorate%20of%20Social%20%26%20Community%20Services/Children%20%26%20Families/Missing%20Children%20Tracker/December%202014/Missing%20from%20care.xlsx>).
6. This tracker is saved by Safeguarding Team in a central folder location by weekly date.
7. Education/Thriving Families to access the tracker to ensure that the missing children are recorded appropriately. Any additional information regarding missing to be inserted by the leads in the respective services.
8. Definitions of Missing Children² (Appendix 1).
9. MASH are also able to process the missing children information to the correct service. (Flowchart).

This includes:-

- i. Transfer for a single assessment to the Referral and Assessment Team.
- ii. Transfer to allocated social worker where the case is allocated and to Thriving Families. Screening and assessment on the same day by Thriving families and Team admin to ensure oversight of contents.

1

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/350737/CME_guidance_final_template__CB_.pdf

2
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/307867/Statutory_Guidance_-_Missing_from_care__3_.pdf

- iii. Transfer to looked after children's service for children missing from care.
 - iv. Divert from MASH to Thriving Families.
1. Information from the missing meeting is shared across children's social care and Thriving Families. There is a weekly updated spreadsheet emailed to all managers. Managers ensure that this information is uploaded onto Liquid Logic and the actions completed. Where staff receive emails arising from the missing meeting these are to be uploaded onto database, Liquid Logic, and the actions completed as required.
 2. YOT and Community Safety to email MASH if there is information to be shared at the weekly missing meeting. These agencies can attend the weekly meeting if they wish to. These agencies should cross reference young people and association with the Serious Violence Panel as well as information about gangs or Chanel Panel concerns. YOT and Community Safety have access to the missing tracker to ensure they can cross reference information.
 3. Return Home Interviews are completed by Thriving Families and these are for all cases where the child or young person is not in care.
 4. Children in care are provided a Return to Placement Interview. This is by someone independent of their social worker.

Statutory Guidance on Children who Run Away or Go Missing from Home or Care Department of Education January 2014

The Definitions used in this Guidance are noted below and are lifted directly from Page 5 and 6 of the Statutory Guidance³

10. The terms below are used throughout this document with the following definitions:

- *Child*: anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. 'Children' therefore means 'children and young people' throughout this guidance.
- *Young runaway*: a child who has run away from their home or care placement, or feels they have been forced or lured to leave.
- *Missing child*: a child reported as missing to the police by their family or carers.
- *Looked after child*: a child who is looked after by a local authority by reason of a care order, or being accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989.
- *Responsible local authority*: the local authority that is responsible for a looked after child's care and care planning.
- *Host local authority*: the local authority in which a looked after child is placed when placed out of the responsible local authority's area.
- *Care leaver*: an eligible, relevant or former relevant child as defined by the Children Act 1989.
- *Missing from care*: a looked after child who is not at their placement or the place they are expected to be (eg, school) and their whereabouts is not known.
- *Away from placement without authorisation*: a looked after child whose whereabouts is known but who is not at their placement or place they are expected to be and the carer has concerns or the incident has been notified to the local authority or the police.

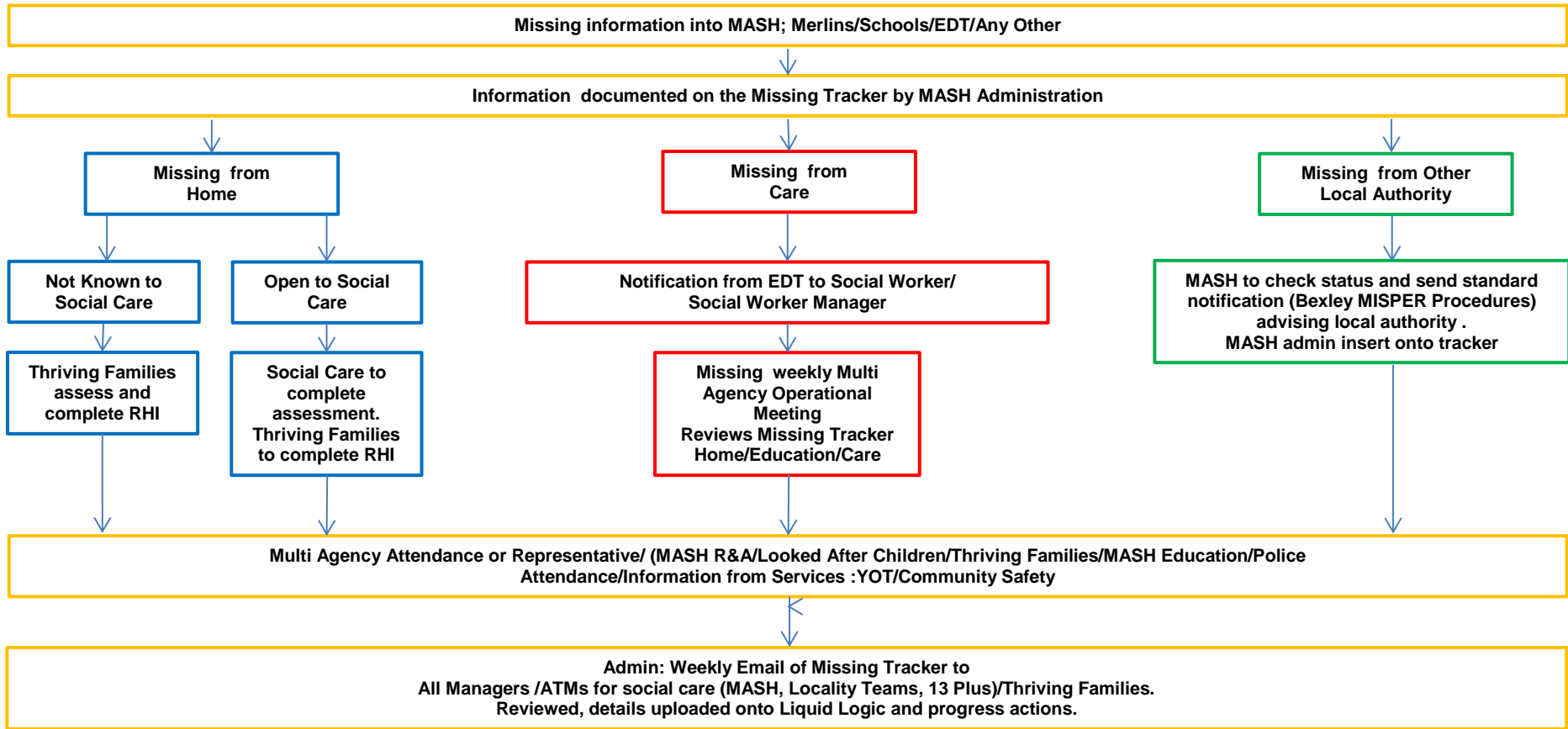
Police definitions

11. Since April 2013 police forces have been rolling out new definitions of 'missing' and 'absent' in relation to children and adults reported as missing to the police. These are:

³ ibid

- *missing*: anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character, or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another; and
- *absent*: a person not at a place where they are expected or required to be.

12. The police classification of a person as 'missing' or 'absent' will be based on on-going risk assessment. Note that 'absent' within this definition would not include those defined as "away from placement without authorisation" above: a child whose whereabouts are known would not be treated as either 'missing' or 'absent' under the police definitions. Guidance on how police forces will apply these definitions to children was issued by ACPO in April 2013.



Education – Head of Inclusion and SEN

