Bromley Safeguarding Children Partnership

Missing Children Protocol

2020

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1. Introduction

In recent years, well publicised cases have highlighted the multiple risks and vulnerabilities facing children who go missing from home and care, which includes the risk of child sexual exploitation, drug and alcohol use and becoming involved in perpetrating, or being a victim of crime.

Some 140,000 children go missing from home or care in the UK each year and it has been estimated that running away places around a quarter of these at risk of serious harm. Children and young people who run away may be *'pushed away'* following abuse or other factors or *'pulled away'* wanting to be near friends or because they are being exploited by adults.

All children and young people who go missing should have a Return Home Interview on their return. Bromley Return Home Interviews indicate that many of young people who go missing, both Children Looked After (CLA) and from the local community, are mainly affected by peer-on-peer influence (e.g. they go missing in order to see and socialise with friends, go to the local park, drink and smoke (peer-related activities). Return Home Interviews also indicate links between missing incidents and peer gang association; as well as offending behaviours.

In order to respond effectively to children and young people who go missing from home and care, it is important that professionals working with them are mindful of the risks they face and make tenacious efforts to protect their welfare by making robust enquiries to locate them. To reduce the risk of further missing episodes, practitioners must understand the 'push and pull' factors that influence the actions of children who go missing, develop relationships of trust with them and build their resilience through child centered assessment, planning and intervention activities.

This protocol sets out the London Borough of Bromley's missing children procedure and provides practice guidance to practitioners and managers for children and young people under the age of 18 (up to 25 for children with disabilities/SEN and Care Leavers) aimed at promoting effective arrangements to safeguard children and young people who go missing from home or care (including residential care).

2. Our Principles

Bromley aims to safeguard children and young people by adhering to the following principals:

- **The safety and welfare of the children and young people is paramount -** Child Protection procedures will be initiated whenever there are concerns that a child, who is missing, may have suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm

- **Our primary aim is to locate and return missing children to a place of safety -** we will ensure our efforts are robust and work effectively with multi-agency partners

- **We will work tenaciously with children, young people and their families, building their resilience** - and providing timely support to meet their needs and reduce repeat missing episodes

- **We will make efforts to learn about the reasons children and young people go missing and the risks they face -** and use this information to create SMART Risk Assessments and Risk Management Plans

- **Our recording of missing episodes will be timely, accurate and up-to date** - to enable accurate data reporting and analysis leading to purposeful service planning

- **Legal action will be taken to safeguard children -** when this is necessary to safeguard their welfare

Whilst this protocol does not specifically cover Children Missing from Education it is informed by good practice guidance on this area. The guidance in this document should not be read in isolation. Additional policy and guidance in relation to children who go missing should be read alongside relevant guidance and procedures for children who are at risk of:

- Child Sexual Exploitation

- Domestic Violence

- Deliberate Self-Harm

- Group Offending; Substance Misuse/Dealing and Gang-Involved Young People

- Children with Disabilities

In keeping with our commitment to ensure that all children are seen heard and helped each case will be considered in the context of the individual child's circumstances.

3. Related Guidance

The document should be read in conjunction with the Bromley Safeguarding Children Partnership Vulnerable Adolescents Strategy 2017-2019 as well as the following documents:

Bromley CSE Protocol and Bromley Gangs/Serious Youth Violence Protocol

The London Child Sexual Exploitation Operating Protocol - 3rd Edition - June 2017

Statutory Guidance on Children who Run Away or Go Missing from Home or Care 2014

London Child Protection Procedures: Children Missing from Care, Home and Education

Safeguarding Children who may have been trafficked 2011.

London Child Protection Procedures - Safeguarding Children from Sexual Exploitation - March 2016

Bromley Threshold of Need

4. Strategic Leadership

The strategic responsibility for children missing from home and care is held by the Head of Service, MASH, RAS and Atlas.

The Atlas Team has the primary responsibility for co-ordinating and increasing safety for children and young people at risk of extra familial (contextual) harm and for those children who go missing from home or care. This team comprises of a team manager, 3 return home interview officers, a data analyst and a business support officer. A CSE intervention worker from the Asphaleia service is also based in the team. The team works closely with the Youth Offending Service, Police (Gangs, Missing, CSE and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)) and Rescue and Response Project.

The Atlas team is located within the MASH and contributes intelligence to daily MASH meetings and the MASH intelligence process thereby supporting the early identification and safeguarding of young people in need of support or protection. All children and young people who go missing from home / care, are at risk of CSE, CCE or serious youth violence are known to the team. The team manager and data analyst attend strategy meetings and collate information in relation to risk assessments and safety planning for young people. The team manager is responsible for ensuring that all young people at medium or high risk are presented and tracked through the MEGA panel.

Through quality assurance activities and data, regular reports on missing children are provided to the Lead Member for Children's Services, the Chief Executive, Bromley Safeguarding Children Partnership and Director for Children's Services.

The Bromley Missing Children Allocated to Children's Social Care process is found at Appendix 1.

5. Definitions

The Police are the lead agency for missing children and they are ultimately responsible for deciding whether to categorise a child as missing. There will be on-going risk assessment and so children may well move between the categories depending on the updated risks.

In 2017, the Police considered their approach to missing and absent definitions and it was agreed the 'absent' category will no longer be used and there is now a single definition of 'missing'. The definition now reads:

"anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered missing until located and their wellbeing or otherwise confirmed"

This single definition includes a 'continuum of risk'. This approach aims to bring about a more consistent and proportionate police response according to risk. Parents and carers now experience the most appropriate response according to the circumstances.

High Risk	
The risk of serious harm to the subject or the public is assessed as very likely. *(College of Policing APP 2017)*	This category almost always requires the immediate deployment of police resources. A member of the BCU senior leadership team or similar command level must be involved in the examination of initial enquiry lines and approval of appropriate resourcing levels. Such cases should lead to the appointment of an IO and possibly an SIO and PoISA engagement prior to search assets being deployed. There should be a press/media strategy and/or close contact with outside agencies. Family support should be put in place through a FLO or via the Missing People charity. The NCA Missing Persons Bureau should be notified of the case if outstanding after 72 hours. A Child Rescue Alert should be considered in cases involving individuals under 18 years old (see toolkit) If Under 18, Children's Services should be notified immediately (This is usually done via the Merlin shared via MASH)
Medium Risk	
The risk of harm to the subject or the public is assessed as likely but not serious. *(College of Policing APP 2017)*	This category requires an active and measured response by police and other agencies in order to trace the missing person and support the person reporting.
Low Risk	
The risk of harm to the subject or the public is assessed as possible but minimal. *(College of Policing APP 2017)* *Children aged 17 and under CAN be considered in this category where established circumstances dictate* *'Regular' episodes of missing are often a sign of significant risk and therefore low risk should not be an automatic consideration without further rationale.*	Proportionate enquiries should be carried out to ensure that the individual has not come to harm.

6. Practice Guidance

Appendix 1 illustrates the operational flowchart in relation to Bromley Missing Children Allocated to Children's Social Care.

6.1 Working with the Police

The Police as the lead agency for the investigation of missing children will conduct investigations into all children reported as missing. The local authority and other agencies are under a duty to cooperate with any investigation for a child at risk of harm.

6.2 Notification

It is expected that parents and carers will take all reasonable and practicable steps to locate a child missing from home and inform the police without delay. If a child is discovered to be missing and their parent/carer has not reported this to the police, they should be strongly encouraged to do immediately.

For Looked After Children the primary carer should report the child missing to the Police by calling 101 immediately and advise the local authority of the CAD number and circumstances leading up to the child going missing.

To support the police investigation, the following information should be shared.

- Description of the child including their clothing
- Details of where the child was last seen and with whom
- Recent photograph
- Relevant addresses, known associates and addresses frequented
- Name and address of child's School, GP and Dentist
- Previous history of missing and circumstances of where found
- Circumstances under which the child is missing
- Any factors that increase the risk to the child
- Child's Oyster or ZIP card / Travel card details
- Child's telephone number / email / social media

6.3 Response from the Police

The police classification of a person as 'missing' are based on continuous monitoring and risk assessment in line with current guidance.

All cases classified as 'missing' by the Police will receive an active Police response – such as deployment of officers to locate a child.

When receiving a missing person report in relation to Children in Care, the Police will tailor their response to the circumstances and the risk assessment of the child. Children living out of borough will be reported as missing to the police force in the locality of the placement.

Categories for high, medium and low risk are given on page 6 above.

6.4 Exceptional Missing Episodes

In addition to high risk groups some children may be regarded as at exceptional risk when missing. These children include those who are very young, vulnerable as a result of a disability or mental ill health, they are regarded as an immediate risk to self or others or where the missing episode is lengthy including where there is no proof of life.

In these cases the following is important:

- That the missing episode is correctly categorized by the police at the outset in terms of risk level including consideration of the episode as a crime incident
- That all relevant information is shared with police to ensure they can assess the risk accurately including the child's involvement in criminal or gang activity or links to any associates of concern
- That efforts to locate the child are immediately proactive so that intelligence and telecommunications methods can be considered/utilized before time elapses and these become less effective
- If there is disagreement regarding the risk level selected by police/investigative approach this should be escalated immediately - see Appendix 3: BSCP Multi-Agency Escalation Policy
- That regular contact is maintained with the family/parents of the missing child to seek and share information with them regarding locating the child- this may involve unannounced visits to the family by a social worker as well as planned liaison and support
- The use of media campaigns and publicity should be kept under review
- That the missing episode is managed via a tight multi-agency plan with clear timescales which is regularly and pro-actively kept under review. Multi-agency meetings should take place a minimum of weekly for long term missing children but this may be more frequent and actions should be tracked in between meetings. Initial strategy meeting may need to be chaired at a senior level e.g. Head of Service: Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance and in some cases Director-level. Please see Appendix 2 (Bromley Process – Missing Children Allocated to Children's Social Care) for breakdown of timescales.
- That these missing episodes have oversight at the right level of seniority within each agency
- Minutes of meetings and actions must be circulated to the line manager and senior officers in each agency for review, oversight and tracking
- That any drift and delay in the plan, lack of engagement by a key agency or where the child is not located involve multi-agency challenge where necessary and rapid escalation to senior officers (see Appendix 3: BSCP Multi-Agency Escalation Policy)

7. Roles of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) & Missing Co-ordinate

All missing child notifications will be screened and processed by the MASH. The following actions will be undertaken by the MASH and partner agencies:

- The Police Public Protection Desk will notify the MASH as soon as a MERLIN is received
- The MASH **will prioritise all Missing notifications** and screen to determine if known to CSC, Education, YOT or Targeted Youth Service, create a missing episode in the Children and Young Person Missing Record form on CareFirst and notify the Missing Co-ordinator
- If a child is not currently open to social care or known, a contact will be created and the partnership in MASH will gather information for a safeguarding risk assessment
- The MASH Manager will assess the information gathered from partners to inform the risk assessment during a missing episode and on return home and to determine next steps
- The Missing Co-ordinator will track the episode, timescales and liaise with the police if the child is currently or previously known to CSC and will signpost, where relevant, to the lead professional/allocated Social Worker
- The Missing Co-ordinator will track all missing young people and refer them for a Return Home Interview once located

8. Return Home Interviews

Statutory guidance requires that Return Home Interviews are offered to all young people who go missing. Return Home Interviews should take place **within 72 hours** of the child or young person returning or being found.

In Bromley the Return Home Interview (RHI) process is managed by the nominated Provider and arranged as soon as a referral from the Missing Coordinator is received.

The Bromley Return Home Interview Referral Form and Bromley Return Home Interview Record Form are found at Appendices 2 and 3 respectively.

8.1 Planning for When a Child is Located and their Return (RHIs)

If a child is 'missing' the Police and parents, Social Worker, Residential Unit Staff/Foster Carer and Police should commence contingency planning for when the child is located. Plans should include:

- Will the child return to the placement/home address or are they safe in the location where they are found?
- If the child is to return, how will s/he be conveyed to their placement/home address?
- Do the Police wish to interview the child where they are located or after they have returned to their placement/home address?
- Confirming who will talk to the child when s/he is located / returned

- Normally the Residential Unit Staff/Foster Carer or Social Worker/Emergency Duty Team (out of hours) will make arrangements for the transportation of a child to his/her placement/home address

8.2 Purpose of the Return Home Interview

The purpose of the Return Home Interview is to:

- Identify and deal with any harm the child has incurred (his/her medical condition should be discussed immediately and any need for medical attention assessed)
- Understand and address the reasons the child ran away (the child's living arrangements/placement might need to be reviewed, an Early Help assessment may need to be completed)
- Establish where the child/young person was during the missing period;
- Identify any concerns that exist regarding the activity or treatment of the child or young person whilst missing - CSE, Gangs, Offending, Drugs…
- Establish what may need to change to reduce the likelihood of further episodes - Push and Pull factors
- Determine and plan for potential support to meet the needs of the young person
- Understand the level of risk of the Child or Young Person repeating the runaway
- Confirmation that the child has been given information about how they can access further or on-going support services
- Obtain parents/carers view of the incident
- Seek to establish the views of what the child wants to happen now – short term/long term
- Discussion with the child about whether they are happy where they are living, or are they worried/upset about anything? Are they afraid of anybody?
- Build a picture of the child's normal Friendship Groups and Patterns (including reference to gangs)

8.3 Information from Return Home Interviews

Completed copies of Return Home Interviews will be loaded onto the child's file by the Atlas Team and will be shared with the investigating officer of the missing episode in the Misper Team, Team Manager, allocated Social Worker (for children or Young People on a plan), YOS and Targeted Youth Service. The allocated social worker must review and incorporate any findings on changing risks into the Child's Plan. The RHI can also be used to assist in building a comprehensive picture of the child, the reasons for going missing, the risks they may be exposed to and how their parents or carers can support a reduction in risk of future missing episodes. The RHI can inform future risk assessments or assist in finding the child should they go missing again.

If a child chooses not to engage with a return interview the Return Home Interview (RHI) worker will record the reasons for this and share this with the Local Authority nominated manager. Sometimes it is not possible to contact a child directly and / or parents may refuse for a return interview to be conducted. Should this be the case, this information will also be reviewed by the nominated manager.

The RHI will support an evaluation by the MASH Team Manager of whether the child is likely to continue to go missing or may require a statutory assessment and/or intervention from Children's Social Care Services or requires an early help response.

The Bromley Return Home Interview Referral Form is found at Appendix 2; with the Bromley Return Home Interview Record Form is found at Appendix 3.

9. Risk Assessment

A Risk Assessment should be completed immediately on every occasion a child is 'missing'. The Bromley Missing Risk Assessment Tool is found at Appendix 4.

The **Risks section in the Missing Workspace** on the Children and Young Person Missing Record form on CareFirst must be completed and or updated every time a child is reported missing and/or located. The Risk Management Tool should be used to inform care planning/risk management arrangements and remain under review for escalation as necessary. The Risk Assessment may include input from others involved in supporting the child such as the family, Social Worker, Targeted Youth Service, CAMHS, Education Welfare, Health, YOS or School.

The Child/Young Person's Plan should outline any individual vulnerability and risk factors that could increase the chances of the child going missing as well as information to help manage any missing episodes and finding the child. All care plans and risk assessments should be **regularly reviewed**, updated and recorded to include the following information:

- The degree and nature of risk and vulnerability if the child goes missing
- The views of the child and those with parental responsibility on action to be taken if the child goes missing
- The level of supervision/support that services or care staff will provide for the child
- How parents/carers will be informed and communicated with if their child goes missing
- Consideration of any external influences that may result in a child's removal without consent
- The likelihood of the child being harboured, any previous episodes, locations frequented by the child and trigger Incidents
- Agreed interventions
- Placement stability – their feelings about the separation from their families, carers or friends or about the placement they are in, or the restrictions placed on them
- Going missing as a coping strategy when difficulties arise
- Influences both within and outside the placement
- A desire to return to their families/carers or spend time with their friends.

9.1 Strategy Meetings

Whilst the majority of children who go missing return within reasonable timescales and do not go missing regularly, there are a minority of children for whom their episodes of going missing cause great concern for practitioners working with them. This may be because they have gone missing

for an extended period, they have gone missing on a number of occasions or there are particular risks associated with their periods missing from home (e.g. risk of sexual exploitation; criminal activities, substance use, deliberate self-harm, etc.).

The social worker must arrange an early missing person **Strategy Meeting within 24 hours** when there are particular concerns for the child's welfare, for example a young person who runs away persistently, leaves their placement to meet with unfamiliar or inappropriate adults, or is vulnerable to risk taking behaviours and exploitation. These meetings are particularly important to analysis and share information with Police and Health colleagues about groups of young people who run away together.

If a child goes missing repeatedly, consideration must be given to the 'push and pull factors' and the actions required to ensure the child is safeguarded in a model of early intervention and prevention. **Continual multi-agency Strategy Meetings should be held at a minimum of weekly intervals to monitor and respond to missing episodes until there is confidence that the issue has been resolved.**
Strategy discussions should also consider:

- The need to initiate a missing child health alert which will notify all local health providers of the missing child and any particular vulnerabilities. This will be particularly important if the child/young person has identified health needs such as a mental health condition, substance misuse or a health condition. The Named Professionals within all NHS provider organisations can initiate these alerts
- Alerting the National missing persons desk (parental consent required where child is not CLA)
- National Referral Mechanism where the child is missing and subject to exploitation, trafficking or modern slavery
- Agreements on communication between agencies and with the parents / carers
- Action required and agreed to locate the child
- Updates to the Risk Assessment
- Agreements in relation to a Media Strategy

The Atlas Team will hold Missing Strategy Meeting for those children and young people who most regularly go missing in order to maintain oversight.

9.2 Children Looked After (CLA) or Children subject to Child Protection procedures

There is a statutory requirement for each Local Authority to record all CLA missing episodes exceeding 24 hours. Children who have a Child Protection Plan or who are subject to a Section 47 enquiry will require additional action.

Specific actions for missing Children Looked After and Children Subject to a Child Protection Plan include:

- Informing the Local Authority Head of Safeguarding or equivalent
- Ensuring that a Strategy Meeting is arranged on the first available working day

- Representatives from the relevant agencies should attend the strategy meeting as well as other practitioners involved with the child
- Children's Services via the MASH should also implement the London Notification of Missing Children/Person Procedure
- Where is it deemed appropriate, the child's parents/carers should be informed of the missing episode
- The Director of Children's Services should also receive notification of all children who are missing for **more than 72 hours**

9.3 Children Looked After and Care Leavers

As our local data shows Children in Care, particularly 16-17 year olds are over represented in the groups of children that go missing, as a particularly vulnerable group of children we must ensure that our approach in working with them is robust to protect them from exploitation and other forms of harm.

9.4 Initial Missing Risk Assessment

Placement planning for every child who is becoming Looked After or who is already Looked After must include consideration of the risks and vulnerabilities associated to missing and reach an agreement with all those involved in the child's care, as to how the placement will respond to missing and 'away from placement without authorisation' incidences.

The child's Social Worker is responsiblele for ensuring that an initial assessment of risk is completed when a young person is accommodated or changes placement. This should include an assessment of the level of risk within the geographical area in which the young person is to be placed, particularly where the placement is outside of the Local Authority area.

Before a child is placed in an Out of Authority Placement, the Social Worker for the responsible authority should liaise with the residential / foster care agency and the host Local Authority and agree to the actions required to be taken if a child is reported as missing or away from placement without authorisation from by their provider.

It is recognised that in emergency or unplanned placements, the Placement Plan, including the initial assessment of risk, is unlikely to have been completed, prior to the child being placed. Prior risk assessments and Missing Action Plans should be shared with the new placement if there are grounds to suspect that the young person is likely to go missing from their new placement, a multi-agency preventative strategy discussion or meeting should be held to reduce the risks.

The initial risk assessment and any action plans should be reviewed as part of the Looked After reviewing processes and following any missing episode.

The Agency should contact the child's Social Worker or the responsible authority's Out of Hours Service as soon as it is confirmed that a child is missing from the placement.

If a child in care has been missing for 48 hours or on 3 or more occasions, the child's Plan

should be updated to outline how practitioners will support the child/young person and ensure that they are safeguarded from harm

9.5 Photographs

Two recent photographs of the child (face and full body length) should be retained by the carer for missing from care purposes. All LCS records must include copies of these photographs. Social Workers and Bromley Children's Home staff are responsible for regularly updating.

A meeting will be convened by Children's Social Care Services, chaired by the child's Independent Reviewing Officer, Child Protection Coordinator, Team Manager or equivalent, and attended by all relevant agencies. Parents/careers with parental responsibility should be informed of the steps the local authority is taking to locate he child and be kept informed of progress.
The Director must be notified of all Children Looked After who have been missing for more than 24-hours. If the child continues to be missing for 48 hours and following our pathway procedures the Director of Children Service will consider advising the Deputy Chief Executive.

If another multi-agency meeting has already been arranged (i.e. Child Protection Conference or Care Planning Meeting) you may consider the possibility of utilising that meeting to address the missing concerns and formulate a Missing Strategy rather than hold a separate meeting.

Where relevant, the child's Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) must be informed of all instances of a child being missing or away from placement without authorisation. The child's Care Plan should reflect details of arrangements required to keep the child safe and minimise the future risk of the child going missing from their placement.

If the child's whereabouts are known or suspected, parent/carers/residential staff in conjunction with the Social Worker should decide whether to allow the child to temporarily remain in that location, or to arrange for their return. These children should **NOT** be classified as missing nor reported to the Police. The responsibility for returning these children remains with Children Services, but the Police can assist with this return if there is reason to believe there will be criminal or public order issues.

The facility to refer missing episodes to MASH for additional safeguarding checks will be available in each borough.

The child's Independent Reviewing Officer must be kept fully informed of any incidences of a child missing or away from placement without authorisation.

9.6 Review of Child Looked After's Care Plan

When a Child Looked After who has been missing has been located, the child's social worker and their line manager should decide in consultation with the child's Independent Reviewing Officer, carers and the child whether they should convene an early statutory review of the child's Care Plan.

The statutory review will provide an opportunity to check that the Care Plan has been appropriately amended to address the reasons for the child's missing episodes and include an intervention strategy to prevent reoccurrences.

The Child's Independent Reviewing Officer should also review the suitability of the placement in conjunction with the child, and his / her family, the placement provider and the child's social worker.

9.7 Media

The Director of Children Social Care and the Police have responsibility for considering whether to inform the media regarding missing Children Looked After to assist in locating the individual. However decisions to publicise a missing Child Looked After will only be taken after discussions have taken place between the Police and Director of Children's Services to agree a media strategy. The Social Worker, whenever possible, should also ensure that those with parental responsibility are informed of the media presentation.

Where agreement over publicity cannot be reached between the Police and Local Authority, the ultimate decision on publicity is that of the Police. However, the Police must have reasons to publicise against the wishes of the Local Authority and these reasons must be recorded.

Unless it is absolutely necessary, the child will not be identified as a Looked after child.

9.8 Intervention Plans/Strategies - Prevention and Planning

Missing interventions seek to reduce the risks that a child may be exposed to and prevent the likelihood of further incidents of the child missing or away from placement without authorisation

9.9 Managing Repeat Missing Episodes

Common strategies to manage repeat missing episodes include:

- Disrupting the child's contact with adults suspected of being involved in grooming, abuse, coercion, trafficking, violence, use and supply of illegal substances, illegal activities and sexual exploitation
- Disrupting the child's relationship with other young people suspected of introducing them to adults involved in grooming, abuse, coercion, trafficking, violence, use and supply of illegal substances, illegal activities and sexual exploitation
- Gathering evidence to prosecute adults suspected of being involved in grooming, abuse, coercion, trafficking, violence, use and supply of illegal substances, illegal activities and sexual exploitation
- Listening and taking account of the child's wishes and feelings
- Promoting positive relationships with family, friends and carers
- Identifying ways of physically protecting the child
- Ensuring contact is maintained with a child whilst missing
- Setting clear boundaries and developing contracts regarding expectations and responsibilities
- Motivating positive behaviour
- Empowering the carer/ foster carer
- Building the child's self-esteem, self-confidence and self-worth through the provision of

positive activities

- Raising awareness of the risks associated with running away or being missing
- Meeting any physical, emotional, mental health needs the child might have
- Working with the carers or parents to make the child's home a place where they want to be
- Working with education & training providers to meet the child's needs
- Providing specialist support through to multi-agency partnerships

10. High Risk Groups

10.1 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeing Children (UASC)

When UASC are reported missing, they will retain their status as Looked After Children unless one or more of the criteria are met.

- They return to a birth parent/someone with parental responsibility
- They are located in another country
- The case is taken over by another local authority
- They are age assessed as being over 18yrs

No UASC under 18yrs who is missing should have their Looked After status removed.

There are many additional factors to consider when UASC children are reported missing and further practice guidance should be sought to ensure there is a coordinated approach to full information sharing with the Police and Home Office who will hold a current photograph and finger print record of the child. The risk assessment should seek to establish:

- Relevant details about the child's background and journey to the UK
- An understanding of the grounds for Asylum
- An analysis of the child's vulnerability
- Adults who may be connected to the young person
- The likelihood of the child going missing
- Consider putting the young person in a safe place
- The appropriateness of information being divulged as to the whereabouts of the young person

When concerns of significant harm are identified i.e. in cases of possible trafficking or sexual exploitation, a strategy meeting should be held which should consider what preventative measures can be put in place to safeguard the child/ young person.

Children Looked After reviews should be held as required by statutory guidance until the young person is deemed to be no longer Looked After.

For young people aged 16 and 17yrs who go missing a LAC review chaired by their Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) should be held to determine whether they remain looked after or whether it is appropriate to have their legal status changed to former Relevant.

If a young person has not been found by their 18th birthday then a formal Missing children meeting should be held to determine whether the case should be closed.

The missing children meeting should incorporate information from the Police, Home Office and other agencies were appropriate. The case should only be closed if there are no ongoing concerns about the vulnerability of the young person being expressed.

Any decision to close the case should be on the proviso that it is reopened if the young person is located and found to be in need of services as an eligible, relevant or former relevant child.

Additional practice guidance on safeguarding UASC can be found in government guidance Safeguarding Children who may have been trafficked 2011.

10.2 Homeless 16/17 year olds

When a 16 or 17 year old runs away or goes missing they are no less vulnerable than younger children and are equally at risk, particularly of sexual exploitation or involvement with gangs.

10.3 Trafficked Children

Trafficked children are at high risk of going missing, with most who go missing doing so within one week of becoming looked after and many within 48 hours. Unaccompanied migrant or asylum seeking children, who go missing immediately after becoming looked after, should be considered as children who may be victims of trafficking.

10.4 Protecting Children at Risk of Radicalisation

Going missing is a risk factor in relation to radicalisation; a child may go missing because they have already been radicalised. A child's risk of being radicalised might increase because they are missing and are spending time with people who may seek to involve them in radical/extreme activities. The risk is heightened whilst they are missing, because the protective factors of family or care are not available to them.

10.5 Children at Risk of Sexual Exploitation

Going missing is a significant risk factor in relation to sexual exploitation; a child may go missing because they are being sexually exploited. A child's risk of being sexually exploited might increase because they are missing and are spending time with people who may seek to involve them in sexual exploitation. The risk is heightened whilst they are missing because the protective factors of family or care are not available to them. Because there is such a strong link between children going missing and risk of sexual exploitation, professionals should always assess whether a child who has gone missing is being sexually exploited or at risk of being sexually exploited.

10.6 Children at Risk of Offending

Children and young people who go missing from care, home and education also need safeguarding against the risk of offending. Children are playing a significant role, as victims and willing participants, in what is colloquially known as the 'county lines' issue. The 'county lines' issue involves London gangs running drug sales using children as carriers into the Home Counties and beyond.

10.7 Hidden Missing

Research demonstrates that children from black and minority ethnic groups, and children that go missing from education are less likely to be reported as missing. Local authorities and the police should be proactive in places where they believe under reporting may be more likely because of the relationships some communities, or individuals, have with the statutory sector.

10.8 Unaccounted for Children

Social Worker's must be curious about the whereabouts of all children in families receiving statutory services and vigilant in undertaking checks to track and trace all unaccounted for children and to report them as missing if they are unable to be located.

10.9 In any case where there is a concern that a child may be vulnerable to Sexual, Criminal or other form of exploitation including ganga affiliation and suspicion of engagement with 'County Lines' a referral to MEGA should be considered in consultation with the appropriate line manager.

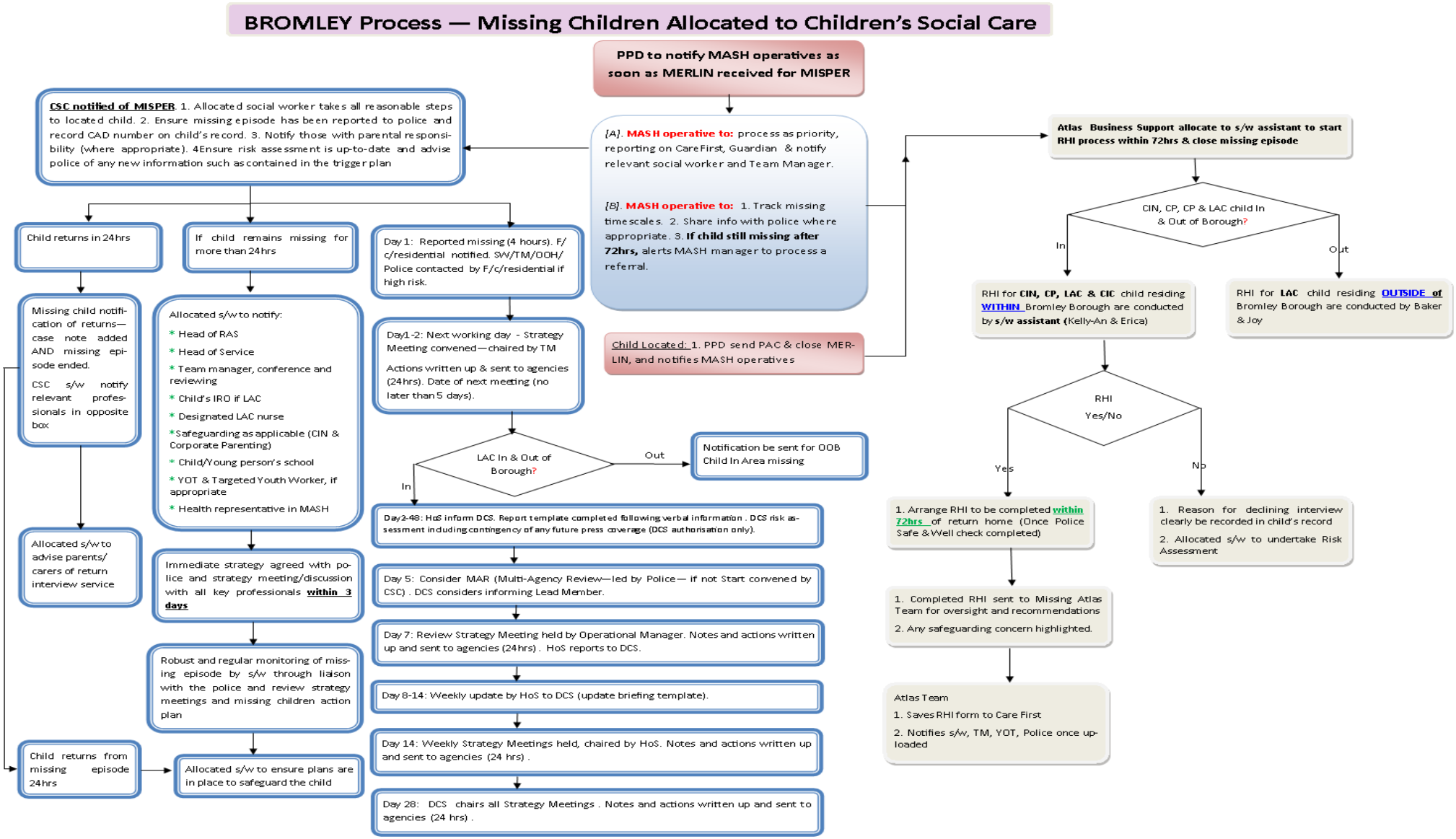
Mega Terms of Reference (ToR) are attached at appendix

10.10 Supporting Agencies

Missing Person's Bureau	The Bureau sits within the National Crime Agency and is a national and international point of contact for all missing persons. The bureau acts as a hub information exchange and hosts a national database of missing and unidentified records.
Missing People	Missing People is a registered charity and was formerly known as the National Missing Persons Helpline. They provide support and advice for families via a national 24 hour free phone helpline 0500 700 700 for people who are missing someone.
Missing Kids	The UK Missing Kids Website is at http://uk.missingkids.com and helps the police to find missing and abducted children. The website enables the police to transmit photographs and information about a missing child to other forces around the UK and abroad.

Stop the Traffik	A global charity which aims to build resilient communities and to prevent human trafficking.

Appendix 1: Bromley Missing Children Allocated to Children's Social Care Flowchart



Appendix 2: Bromley Return Home Interview Referral Form

RHI Referral Form

Date of Referral	
Name of Referrer	
Team Name of Referrer	
Borough	
Address	
E-mail Address	
Telephone number	
Name of Manager	
Young Persons ICS Social Worker	

Missing Episode Started	**Missing Episode Ended**

Known reason for Missing Episode & other relevant information from MERLIN PAC.	**Background information / other missing episode(s)**

Please indicate potential risk indicators for the individual referred:

Suspected/known incident of sexual exploitation ☐	Concerns of relationship with older people ☐
Unexplained money or items ☐	Alcohol or drug use ☐
Suspected/known gang affiliation ☐	Observed in venues/areas of concern ☐
Self-harm ☐	Eating Disorder ☐
International/Internal trafficking (please specify) ☐	Peers involved in sexual exploitation ☐

Involvement in gun/knife crime ☐	Involvement in drug dealing/running ☐
Recent pregnancy/miscarriage/termination ☐	History of youth offending ☐

Please indicate any experience of violence for individual referred:

Domestic Abuse	Current ☐ Historical ☐ Suspected ☐
Sexual Abuse	Current ☐ Historical ☐ Suspected ☐
Physical violence from partner	Current ☐ Historical ☐ Suspected ☐
Physical violence from family	Current ☐ Historical ☐ Suspected ☐
(Physical) Violence towards others	Current ☐ Historical ☐ Suspected ☐
Known/suspected violent peers	Current ☐ Historical ☐ Suspected ☐

Please provide the following information for the individual referred:

Name:	Date of Birth:
Gender**:**	Ethnicity:
Religion:	Preferred Language/Interpreter required:
Disability (please specify):	Statement of SEN:

Address	Are they: / At home (experience of care) ☐ **At home (no experience of care)** ☐ Currently LAC ☐
Telephone contact detail	YP parent/ carer (state who)
School/college/work/NEET details	
CP Registration Plan (Please specify what for and if historic/current)	

Is the individual aware and in agreement to this referral?	
Is the individual's parents/carers aware and in agreement to this referral?	

Other Agencies & Professionals Involved	
Name of agency & professional	Contact details:

Any further relevant information:

Appendix 3: Bromley Return Home Interview Record Form

Record of Return Home Interview

Personal Details	
P/Number	
Name	
Date of birth	
Gender	
Person Ethnicity	
First language	
Religion of the person	
Person current address	
In or Out of Borough?	
Mobile Number	

Background Information

Child or Young Person's Status

☐ Missing (Whereabouts unknown) ☐ Unauthorised absence (Whereabouts know

☐ Unauthorised absence with high risk factors (Whereabouts known but significant risk factors increase vulnerability

Case Status

☐ Child In Need ☐ Child Protection ☐ Looked After Child ☐ No Status

LAC Legal Status	
Type of Placement/Accommodation	
Child Protection Status	
Other Status (Please specify if any)	
Name of School/Day Care Provision	

Child or Young Person's known to:

☐ Social work service ☐ 16+ service ☐ Family service ☐ YOS ☐ Education welfare ☐ SEN ☐ Other

If Other, please specify:	

Children or Young Person at Risk of?

☐ Criminal Activity ☐ CSE ☐ Drugs & Alcohol ☐ Gang ☐ N/A ☐ Other

If Other, please specify:	
Explain risk	

Vulnerability

☐ Disability ☐ Learning ☐ Contact with person/s posing a risk to children

☐ Mental Health Difficulty ☐ Other

If Other, please specify:	

Trusted Adult

Does CYP have a trusted adult?	
Who is CYP's trusted adult?	

Details of RHI

Date CYP missing		
Date CYP Returned		
RHI offered?		
If no, please explain		
Did RHI take place?		
RHI Date		
RHI declined?		
If declined, please explain		
Interviewer name		
RHI undertaken by other professional?		
If yes, who was RHI undertaken by?		
Is Referral made?		
If yes, who was CYP referred to?		

Record of RHI

Suggested Interview topics and questions.

***Reasons identified by the young person for going missing or running away**:*

- *Was this the first time YP has gone missing or has it happened before?*
- *Did the YP runaway alone or with others?*
- *What caused them to run away?*
- *Did they try to resolve any problem before it caused them to run away and if so why didn't this work?*
- *Does this trigger still exist?*

Narrative please	

Events during missing episode – What was happening?

- *Where did the YP stay?*
- *How did they get access to food, money, clothing, showers etc.?*
- *Did they seek medical help?*
- *Did they maintain certain patterns – e.g. stay at school?*
- *Did they get involved in criminal activity?*
- *How long did they stay away for?*
- *What led them to return or be found?*

Narrative please	

Contact during missing episode – who were they with?

- *Did they get help from anyone whilst they were missing?*
- *Did they enter into any relationships, particularly any which made them uncomfortable?*
- *Were they harmed or at risk of harm from other people?*

Narrative please	

How did they feel?

- *Did they feel mentally healthy?*
- *Did they feel bullied, pressured or coerced?*

- *Were there signs of stress, depression or self-harm?*
- *Were they involved in substance misuse?*
- *How did they feel about returning?*

Narrative please	

What Next?

- *Do the things that caused the young person to run away still exist?*
- *What does the young person see as the risks involved with running away again?*
- *What alternatives to running away might there be?*
- ** What does the young person think might be done to prevent them from running away again?*

Narrative please	

Parent/Carer Views Or Professional Feedback:

Narrative please	

Analysis?

- *Hotspot?*
- *Transport?*
- *Location?*
- *Friends?*
- *School?*

Narrative please	

Recommendation:

Narrative please	

Reasons identified by CYP for going missing or running away

Potential Push Factors

☐ Abuse or Neglect

☐ Family break-up

☐ Poor relationships with parents

☐ Domestic violence

☐ Parental substance misuse or mental health problems

☐ Mental health or substance misuse problems

☐ Bullying and Harassment

☐ Teenage pregnancy

☐ Struggling to cope with emotional health

☐ School/Unresolved Issues

Potential Pull Factors

☐ Running back home from care placements or to be near friends/family

☐ Grooming for potential sexual exploitation or child trafficking

☐ Previous incidents of running away

☐ Substance misuse

☐ Criminal Activity

☐ Peer pressure

Intelligence: Contact during missing episode – who were they with?

Name	Gender	Address	Relationship to child

Who has information been shared with?

☐Analyst ☐YOS ☐MACE ☐MASH ☐Parent/Carer ☐Social Worker ☐Police ☐Other

If Other, please list:	
Name/s of person/s information shared with.	

Name of Interviewer	
Date Interview completed	

Senior Managers Comment:	

Appendix 4: Bromley Missing Risk Assessment Tool

Missing Risk Assessment Tool

Missing Risk Assessment Tool

This risk assessment tool has been designed to be used by professionals working with children. This Screening Tool should be used to review all new contacts and referrals whenever a child or young person is missing from their home, placement or place of education without permission. It aims to provide practitioners with a quick and easy framework to highlight the nature and level of concerns and decide what action should be taken. Identified factors should be assessed and regularly reviewed whenever new or different information comes to light during the time the child is away. The Screening Tool should help social work managers and practitioners consider relevant threshold issues, form appropriate professional judgements and make informed decisions about protecting children and young people. Relevant factors should be weighted according to the specific needs and circumstances of each individual child or young people. All the questions in the tool should be considered to get a wider picture as possible of the young person's level of missing. Each statement chosen will generate a score; and the final score will give an indication of the level of involvement and therefore risk to the young person.
Some of the indicators mirror normal teenage behaviour but professionals should consider each statement in the context of other concerns about the young person's behaviour or presentation.
If professionals are unsure about any aspect of this risk assessment tool, they can seek advice from the MASH team on 020 83134418

Details of subject child/young person

Name	
Date of birth	
Gender	
Address	
Ethnicity	
Religion	
Language spoken	

Date of risk assessment	

Household members and significant others

Name	Date of birth	PR	Gender	Ethnicity	Address	Religion	Relationship to child

Details of the person completing risk assessment

Name	
Agency	
Job title	
Contact Tel No	
Contact e-mail	

Vulnerability - ***(Put zero for not applicable question)*** Enter your score here

Under the age of 14	3	0
Looked after	2	0
Child subject to a child protection plan or there are child protection concerns	2	0
Previous history of running away	2	0
Child was harmed or became a victim of crime whilst previously missing	2	0
Child is currently subject to a criminal court order	1	0
Child has a mental health problem and / or there is a risk of self-harm	2	0
There is evidence of the child's mental distress prior to going missing	2	0
Child has a drug or alcohol misuse	1	0
Child is an on-going victim of bullying or harassment	2	0
There are family difficulties or relationship problems within the child's family	1	0
Child has experienced problems at school, college or work	1	0
Maximum Total		0
Risk Factors of Going Missing - ***(Put zero for not applicable question)***		
Episodes and duration of child being missing - missing for over 24 hours, for an extended period or for frequent episodes	2/3	0
Possible abduction or unauthorised removal from home, school or placement	3	0
Child carried out a criminal offence whilst previously missing	1	0
Child has a medical condition requiring regular / urgent medication or treatment that is not available to them	2	0
Child has a physical / sensory disability or learning difficulty that makes it difficult for them to communicate or interact safely with others or makes them additionally vulnerable	3	0
Child is known to associate with adults or children who pose a risk of harm	2	0
Child was involved in a violent incident / confrontation prior to going missing	2	0
Child is / may be a victim of sexual exploitation	2/3	0
Child is / may be a victim of trafficking	2/3	0
Child is / may be a victim of forced marriage, honour based crime or FGM	2/3	0
Child is / may be a victim of radicalisation and at risk of extremism	2/3	0
The child may be going to a dangerous location or destination	2/3	0
Maximum Total		0
Push Factors of Going Missing [Difficult relationships] - ***(Put zero for not applicable question)***		
Problems at home Family break-up – arguments amongst parents, other family members, siblings.	1	0
Health concerns/Domestic violence between parents, family members	1	0
Experiencing Physical abuse, Sexual abuse, Emotional abuse,	2	0
Cultural conflicts	1	0
Problems at school, bullying	1	0
Substance misuse/alcohol problem	1	0
Forced to leave home by family	2	0
Maximum Total		0
[Personal Problems] - *(Put zero for not applicable question)*		
Mental health	1	0

Low self esteem	1	0
Anger management difficulties.	1	0
Social isolation	1	0
Needing space – not able to have own time or space at home. Bored or isolated.	1	0
Feel unsafe where living	2	0
Relationship difficulties – arguments with siblings and mother	1	0
Health/Sexual health problems	1	0
Experiencing difficulties in peer relationships	1	0
Running away from drugs or alcohol problems within the family home.	1	0
Maximum Total		0
[Problems at School] - *(Put zero for not applicable question)*		
Bullying, peer and professional	1	0
Difficulties with work, stress	1	0
Lack of activities opportunity	1	0
Not just interested in going to school	1	0
Maximum Total		0
[Problems in Care Home] - *(Put zero for not applicable question)*		
Unhappy with care home or foster placement – do not think it's suitable	2	0
Argument with foster carer, residential staff.	1	0
Experiencing poor relations with staff	2	0
Unhappy with treatment/ rules	1	0
No one listens to you	1	0
Maximum Total		0
[Trafficking Factors] - *(Put zero for not applicable question)*		
Isolation (being in a foreign country, not speaking the language, not knowing who to trust)	3	0
Young people not understanding their situation/how they are safe and not understanding they were/are victims of trafficking	3	0
Scared of deportation (nearing 18/asylum decision)	3	0
Maximum Total		0
Pull Factors of Going Missing - ***(Put zero for not applicable question)***		
Running to see family, feeling like they are missing out on things/ wanting to choose rather than be told when they can have contact.	2	0
Running to be near friends – friends aren't approved of/ classed as unsuitable. If in care – wanting to see friends when you choose not when told you can.	2	0
Running to be with Boyfriend/Girlfriend – partner not approved of seen as unsuitable	2	0
Went to see friends	1	0
To have fun, go to town, shops, park	1	0
To drink or take drugs and hang out	2	0

Associating with other peers who go missing	2	0
Associating with gangs/county lines	2	0
Went to boyfriend or girlfriend's age appropriate house	1	0
Went somewhere unfamiliar with boyfriend or girlfriend	2	0
Went somewhere unfamiliar with friend/s	2	0
Walked around town or parks alone	2	0
Debt bondage	3	0
Threats of violence to them or their families	3	0
Voodoo/juju ceremonies	3	0
Stockholm Syndrome	3	0
	Maximum Total	0

Overall of risk assessment score and RAG colour	**0**

Guide

Under 10 = No Concerns **(Blue RAG rating)**

10 - 30 = Vulnerable to Missing **(Green RAG rating)**

Social Worker to undertake preventative work with the young person

Other staff to refer for early intervention

30 - 50 = Possibly being targeted for gang intiation/grooming for drug dispatching (Amber RAG rating)

Social worker to follow child protection procedures and convene a Missing child protection strategy meeting

Other staff to refer to MASH

Over 50 = Likely to be involved in gang/crime while Missing **(Red RAG rating)**

Social worker to follow child protection procedures and convene a Missing child protection strategy meeting

Other staff to refer to MASH

Possible model of Missing

Please select the model that best describes the form of Missing the young person may be experiencing

** **Inappropriate relationship**: the young person is in a relationship with an older partner who exerts a great deal of influence and control over them due to an imbalance of power. The young person is likely to believe they are in a serious adult relationship and not recognise its exploitative nature.*

** **Peer gang exploitation**: the young person is in a relationship with another young person who is coercing them into gang/criminal activities with their friends. This is the model that gang related exploitation follows.*

** **Organised exploitation**: the young person is being groomed or initiated as a gang memeber by a network of perpetrators and may be being coerced into gang/criminal activities with different men. Some may be used to recruit others.*

Brief summary of concerns

Please give brief details of what the concerns are for the young person, their likely level of involvement in gang/criminal activities and which indicators evidence this concern

Names of possible perpetrators

Name(s):

Association with other young people at risk of gang/criminal activities while missing (Please give names if known)

Name(s):

Found at or known to frequent specific locations/gang

(Please give details of location)

Location/Gang:

Links with gang members (Please give names if known)

Name(s):

Team Manager's comments

All Missing risk assessments should be signed by the team manager who should record their agreement with the outcome and decisions on what further action will be taken, including whether to convene a Missing/Gang strategy discussion. Social workers and managers may wish to take advice from the Child Protection Officer when deciding on actions.

Comments:

Outcomes / Decisions

** Convene Missing/Gang Child Protection Strategy Meeting (Red or Amber RAG rating)*

** Provide preventative social work support (Green RAG rating)*

** Refer to Early help for preventative support (Green RAG rating)*

** Concerns Unsubstantiated*

Following completion, this risk assessment form must be sent to the Missing/Gang Coordinator in ATLAS Team. Email: Paula.Stacey@bromley.gov.uk. and James.Ivens@met.pnn.police.uk.

Appendix 5:

Bromley Safeguarding Children Partnership Escalation Protocol

BSCP Escalation Policy

Appendix 6:

Terms of Reference MEGA Meetings

Safeguarding Children and Young People at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation(CSE), those who go missing from home and care and those affected by Gang activity / affiliation, criminal exploitation and/or serious youth violence.

Terms of Reference – Missing, Exploitation and Gang Affiliation (MEGA) Tracking Panel.

1. Aim:

To establish an effective strategic multi-agency panel to maintain oversight for Safeguarding children/ young people at risk of significant harm through Exploitation (CSE & Criminality), missing from home and care, trafficking and gang affiliation/serious youth violence.

2. Purpose:

- To ensure that outcomes for children and young people improve through a consistent, co-ordinated and robust management of risk across the partnership.
- To enable information sharing and intelligence gathering which will support effective protection, prevention and disruption.
- To provide a framework to identify themes, trends and connections between young people at risk.
- To build an intelligence picture of the contextual harm across Bromley including locations, persons of concern, victims and perpetrators.
- To hold partners to account for delivery of services to ensure that children and young people are safeguarded.
- To ensure Bromley has effective structures, protocols and agreements in place at both operational and strategic level
- To reduce duplication and aid resource management due to the back to back format of meetings and crossover of subjects

3.. Membership and Frequency.

The panel will take place fortnightly on Wednesday mornings from 10am – 12.30pm at Bromley Civic Centre.

The panel will be held in 2 parts, focusing on:

- Gangs / Serious Youth Violence / Criminal exploitation
- CSE, Missing and Trafficking.

Membership:

Chair	Head of Mash, RAS, Atlas

Police	Gangs SPOC Missing SPOC CSE SPOC
CSC Atlas Unit	Data officer Team Manager
CSC	Referral and Assessment – Represented by Atlas Manager Team Manager – Safeguarding East & West. Team Manager – Children Looked After Group Manager – Leaving Care & 16+
Education	EWO / CME co-ordinator / Virtual School
YOT	YOS Group Manager
Intervention Services	CSE - Asphaleia County Lines - Rescue & Response Targeted Youth Services Mental Health - Bromley Y & CAMHS, Parenting Support - EIS/BCP Substance Misuse - Bromley Changes Mentoring / Gang diversion - St Giles Trust
Contextual Services	Housing lead Probation (when required) Community Safety

All members will need to be of sufficient seniority to direct service delivery and to maintain oversight of case work. Membership should be consistent to aid continuity. Where a member is unable to attend, a suitable delegate should be nominated.

The panel will be co-ordinated and administered by the Business Support Officer for Atlas.

4. Confidentiality, Diversity and Information Sharing Arrangements.

- Each Agency will be required to sign an overarching Information Sharing Agreement which will support proportionality, confidentiality and safeguarding.

- Information shared within the context of the panel, may at times be restricted due to sensitivity.

- The panel will be committed to equal access to services for all, particularly in relation to race, gender, age, religious beliefs, sexual orientation and disability.

5. Child Level Data.

Three data sets will be produced prior to each meeting:

1. Young people at risk of gangs / SYV
2. CSE
3. Missing.

All agencies will be required to review actions and updates prior to the panel. Feedback will be provided at each meeting to ensure that progress for children and young people at risk of harm is swift and focused.

6. Referral pathways.

Children and Young People who are confirmed to be at MEDIUM and HIGH risk will be discussed at MEGA. The risk level will be informed by the relevant risk assessment tool. New referrals will be placed onto the weekly Child Level List by the Team Manager of Atlas.

7. Escalation.

Any member of the panel can escalate concerns directly to the chair for a further decision or case direction. Where there are concerns around service delivery, delays in planning for young people and concerns in relation to practice, the Team Manager for Atlas will raise this directly with the line manager for the case as well as with the Head of Service. The chair will escalate concerns about service delivery to the relevant managers in partner agencies.

8. Governance Arrangements.

The MEGA panel is a Strategic Panel that sits within the Children's Social Care Structure. The effectiveness of the partnership arrangements will however be subject to the scrutiny of the BSCP.

9. Review.

The terms of Reference will be reviewed annually. Date of next review – April 2021