



Children and Young People Missing from Home and Care Protocol

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1. Introduction

The Children's Society "Still Running " survey estimated that 100,000 children under the age of 16 run away from home or care each year across the UK. There are strong links between children and young people involved in sexual exploitation and other behaviours, such as, running away from home or care, bullying, self-harm, teenage pregnancy, truancy and substance misuse. In addition some children and young people are more vulnerable, for example, children and young people with special needs, unaccompanied asylum seeking children, those forced into marriage and those involved with gangs.

This Protocol is important for the safeguarding of children and families in Peterborough, or those using services in the City. It should be read and implemented, by all practitioners and managers working with children/young people who are missing from Home or Care. The Protocol has been developed in accordance to the Statutory Guidance on Children who Run Away or go Missing from Home or Care (2014), Department of Education and has been updated in light of the Cambridgeshire Police position that they will no longer use the category of absent. Reference to **Children Missing from Education Protocol**, Further guidance has been produced for Unaccompanied Asylum seeking Children who go Missing or are at risk of Trafficking. See East of England Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children Safeguarding Protocol (Updated Oct 2015), Forced Marriage and Honour Based Violence Guidance and Child Trafficking Guidance should also be referred to.

The Protocol should be read as guidance only and cannot anticipate every situation. Anyone working with children and young people in a professional capacity should use their professional judgement to take whatever action is needed to safeguard and protect the child or young person. This should be based on assessment of risk for each child or young person.

2. The Legal Framework

The framework for the procedures is based on:

- Statutory Guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care January 2104
- ACPO Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons 2010
- ACPO Interim Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons 2013
- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015

Key Points:

- The law does not generally regard young people under the age of 16 as being able to live independently away from home;
- Where a child/young person under 16 (or 18 if disabled) stays with a person (other than a person with Parental Responsibility or a close relative), for 28 days or more, the person caring for them is acting as a 'private foster carer' within the meaning of s66 of the Children Act 1989 and therefore they must notify the local authority that they are privately fostering the child/young person. 'Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005' SI 2005/1533. Failure to notify the local authority may be an offence;
- Anyone who has care of a child without Parental Responsibility may do what is reasonable in all the circumstances to safeguard and promote the child's welfare (Children Act 1989 s3 (5)). It is likely to be 'reasonable' to inform the police, or Children's Services, and, if appropriate, their parents, of the child/young person's safety and whereabouts;

- Anyone who 'takes or detains' a runaway under 16 without lawful authority may be prosecuted under s2 of the Child Abduction Act 1984. The enforcement of this provision might be problematic, however, if the young person has chosen to stay with another adult of his or her own free will;

3. Scope of Protocol

This protocol is designed for:

- All children/young people under 18 who go missing from their family home;
- Children/young people in the care of Peterborough City Council placed in Local Authority
- Children's Homes within and outside the authority's boundaries;
- Children/young people in the care of Peterborough City Council placed with foster carers within and outside the authority's boundaries;
- Children/young people in the care of Peterborough City Council placed in private establishments or with agency foster carers within and outside the local authority boundaries
- Children/young people in the care of other local authorities who are placed in Peterborough;

Definitions;

Missing Person - (Association of Chief Police Officers' Definition): "a missing person is anyone whose whereabouts are unknown, whatever the circumstances of disappearance. He or she will be considered missing until located and his or her wellbeing, or otherwise, established."

The terms "**young runaway**" and "**missing**" in this context refer to children/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;

An "**absconder**" is a child/young person who is absent from their placement without permission and who is subject to an order or requirement resulting from the criminal justice process such as curfews, tagging etc or a secure order made in either civil or criminal proceedings. In these cases the location of the child must be known otherwise they are deemed missing.

Child Abduction - where a child/young person has been abducted or forcibly removed from their place of residence a report should be made immediately to the police.

Cambridgeshire Police no longer use the category of unauthorised absence for children under 18

4. Governance Arrangements

Cambridgeshire Police collect information about missing children on the "Compact" database. The Police will provide Children's Social Care (Missing Case Worker) with regular reports of children who have been reported missing. Children's Social Care should provide any information that they obtain about the location of a missing child or the risk that they might be in immediately to police. This also includes if they have been located by Social Care.

Peterborough's Childrens Services will also record all missing children on ICS – (Liquid Logic)

A monthly multi agency operational meeting will be held to review patterns and trends in terms of those children going missing in Peterborough and how risks identified in Return Interviews are addressed. It will also consider the links between missing episodes and increased associated risks particularly the risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).

5. Procedures

Before Contacting Police

When a child or young person is not at the place that they are expected to be the reporting individual must take proactive steps to locate them prior to contacting the police and ensure that they keep a record of what they have done so that this information can be given to the police.

Immediate proactive attempts to locate the child or young person should include checking the home, checking outdoor locations such as garage, park, trying to make contact by phone, text, and contacting wider family and friends to see if child or young person has made contact with them.

If attempts to locate the child or young person are unsuccessful then the matter should be referred to the police through a 101 call unless there is an immediate risk of significant harm when a 999 call is required.

Initial Police Response

On receipt of a report of a runaway/missing child Cambridgeshire Police will instigate a plan to locate the child. A record will be created on the Compact missing person's database and an investigation will commence.

All children who are open to CSC (CiN, CP or CLA) who are considered to be missing must be reported to the Contact Centre so that alerts can be sent to MASH or the allocated social worker, the responsible Local Authority, the Conference and Review Service and the Missing from Education Service.

Notification email address: pdscsc@peterborough.gcsx.gov.uk

The police, following national guidance, will conduct a risk assessment by gathering information from family and other agencies as appropriate. This risk assessment will form the basis for the resulting proportionate actions. The police will grade the missing episode in the following ways:

HIGH RISK	Risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the subject is in danger through their own vulnerability; or they may have been the victim of a serious crime; or the risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the public are in danger.
MEDIUM RISK	The risk posed is likely to place the subject in danger or they are a threat to themselves and others.

It should be noted that a LOW RISK category does exist for missing persons. However Children and young people under 18 years should not be included in this classification.

If the child /young person is found by family or friends it is their responsibility to return them to the home address. Parents and carers must inform the police when a child/young person returns of their own accord.

In recovering a child/young person where there is a substantial risk in doing so, the police may become involved in assisting.

Routinely the child/young person should be returned home unless there are grounds to suspect there is a risk posed at home. If risk is suspected Police Officers are encouraged to consider their powers under CA 1989 s.46 (Police Protection).

Childrens Services Response

Childrens Services should convene a **Strategy Meeting** in the following situations:

- Where there is immediate risk of significant harm and the child or young person has significant vulnerabilities, such as learning needs, risk of CSE, under 13, significant health needs requiring medication etc
- Where the child/young person is subject of a child protection plan and has been missing over a 24 hour period.
- Where the child/young person is a looked after child and has been missing over a 24 hour period.
- Where the child/young person has had 3 instances of missing overnight within the last 90 days
- Where the child/young person has been missing for more than 5 days continuously

The Strategy Meeting will be carried out once all relevant information has been obtained and in any case within 72 hours.

A Need to Know should be completed immediately and sent to the relevant Head of Service and the Assistant Director of Childrens Services in all cases where a child who is on a Child Protection Plan or is a Child who is Looked After goes missing. This should be updated following a Strategy Meeting being held, new information becoming available that increases risks, or the child is located and returned home or back to care placement.

Other circumstances when a Need to Know should be completed is when a child goes missing and there are significant concerns about their immediate safety or where they have particular vulnerabilities which increases the risks such as learning difficulties, medical needs, child sexual exploitation.

Once child or young person is located

On a child or young person being located the police will conduct a "**Safe and Well**" check as soon as possible to ensure the young person's wellbeing and safety and to establish if they were a victim of crime or abuse whilst missing. If the police have any immediate safeguarding concerns they will refer the child/young person to Childrens Services - **Contact Centre. Tel: 01733 864170.**

All missing children will be referred through to the Contact Centre for information sharing purposes and to enable the Return Interview to be conducted by an independent individual.

Once child or young person is located – Out of Hours

Where the Police have immediate concerns about the circumstances of a child who has been reported missing from home out of office hours e.g. concern that the child may be at risk if returned home, they will contact Emergency Duty Team (EDT) to assess the child's needs and make appropriate arrangements for accommodation. This will include young people who may be at risk of 'honour'-based violence or forced marriage.

Should EDT have involvement with a missing child they will inform and provide information to the relevant Children's Social Care Team for the child's area or case responsible social worker for action as soon as day time services resume.

Social Care Teams will send an alert to EDT where a child with whom they are working has run away/gone missing from home with specific actions to be taken should the child be located.

If the child/young person cannot be returned home during normal working hours the decision to place the child elsewhere will be made by the Assistant Director for Safeguarding or the Assistant Director of Commissioning. Outside of normal working hours this decision will be made by the Emergency Duty Team in consultation with the Head of Service who is on call.

6. Return Interview

A person who is independent of the case should carry out a Return Interview within 72 hours of the child/young person being located or returning from a missing episode.

NYAS will undertake all Return Interviews with children and young people who are Looked After by Peterborough City Council whether they be in city or placed out of city.

The Missing Case Worker based in MASH will undertake all Return Interviews with children and young people who live at home.

If the child or young person refuses to take part in the Return Interview, parents and carers must be offered the opportunity to provide any relevant information and intelligence. This should help to prevent further instances of the child running away and identify the support needed for them going forward.

The Return Interview will:

- **Identify any harm the child may have suffered- including harm that might not have been disclosed as part of the Safe and Well Check – either before they ran away or whilst missing.**
- **Where possible, Identify which locations the child visited and who they have been and in contact with during that period.**
- **Understand and try to address the reasons why the child ran away**
- **Help the child feel safe and understand that they have options to prevent repeat instances of them running away.**
- **Provide them with information on how to stay safe if they choose to run away again, including helpline numbers.**

The Return Interview needs to be shared with the police through the missing person's team via emailing **missingperson@cambs.pnn.police.uk**. This Return Interview is used to assist in future missing investigations and intelligence around general criminal activity that impacts on vulnerable individuals (e.g. CSE risks).

If it is suspected that the child/young person may have been the victim of child sexual exploitation the Child Exploitation Checklist must be completed and forwarded to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub in Chord Park.

MARU@cp@cambs.pnn.police.uk. The checklist can be found on the PSCB website

<http://www.safeguardingpeterborough.org.uk/>

7. Children who have not been found

Police and Childrens Services will monitor the progress of efforts to locate the child who has gone missing. If a child is not found within 72 hours of a referral being received the case should be reviewed by the Head of Service who will need to be satisfied that everything is being done to locate and safeguard the child. Media assistance may be required in some cases and this will be decided in the Strategy Meeting with the police.

A follow up Strategy Meeting should be held on Day 5 of the missing episode and this should be chaired by the Head of Service. Further Strategy meetings should be held as required to monitor efforts and review progress but as a minimum they should be held on a 4 weekly basis until the child is located.

A Need to Know should be updated on a 4 weekly basis and sent to the Assistant Director and the relevant Head of Service.

If a child is on a Child Protection Plan remains missing after 20 days a Review Child Protection Conference should be convened and a clear plan put in place to address the risks.

8. Support for 16 and 17 Year Olds that go Missing

16 and 17 year olds who run away or go missing are not necessarily any less vulnerable than younger children and are likely to need as much support to get their lives back on track and make a successful transition into adulthood. However as young people over 16 can chose to leave home it may be necessary to involve other services such as housing officers in the assessment of their needs. Vulnerable young people need to be in a safe housing setting and therefore no 16 or 17 year old should be placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation by Housing or Childrens' Services, except in an emergency situation and for the shortest time possible where this is the only available option

Please refer to the Homeless Protocol for 16 -17 Year Olds

9. Children who repeatedly go Missing

For those children who repeatedly go missing and certainly if there have been 3 episodes of missing overnight within the 90 day period a Strategy Meeting should be held to evaluate all information and determine whether there is a need to conduct enquiries under s47, convene an Initial Child Protection Conference or consider legal action. These children may also be referred to the monthly Operational Group for review to ensure that all multi agency action is in place to reduce risks and provide alternatives to going missing. Chronologies are crucial in assisting professionals with identifying patterns of missing and should be kept up to date as per policy.

10. Absconders

An absconder is a young person who is absent from the placement without permission and who is subject to an order or requirement resulting from the criminal justice process (e.g. remands, curfews, tagging, conditions of residence, other bail conditions, Police And Criminal Evidence (PACE) detention or Anti- Social Behaviour Orders (ASBO), or a secure order made in either civil or criminal proceedings. Children/young people will be reported in the first instance as missing from home, and latterly as absconding. The primary concern is for the welfare of the child.

A young person in this category must be reported to the Police without delay, who will deal with the matter using the appropriate powers under the relevant legislation. In all cases the child/young person's absence will be reported as a child missing from home or care regardless of their criminal status. Where possible, the carer or responsible adult is expected to make immediate proactive enquiries to locate the absconder.

11. Looked After Children Who Go Missing

The Local Authority has the same duty of care toward all children who are looked after whether they are accommodated under s20 (CA 1989) or subject to Care or Interim Care Orders.

It is important to be concerned for the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person who goes missing from care in terms of not only what might happen to them whilst missing, but also because of their reasons for doing so.

Where there is a possibility that a looked after child will run away and go missing from a residential home or foster placement, then the child's care plan, along with the placement plan, should include a strategy to minimise this risk.

Peterborough City Council will ensure that all service providers considered for care for looked after children have a policy in place for meeting the needs of children who run away/ go missing which meets with requirements.

Peterborough City Council's approach to managing missing from care episodes is a key element of its corporate parent responsibilities and helping to ensure the best possible outcomes for all the children that it looks after.

Care Leavers

Care Leavers may be particularly vulnerable to going missing. Care leavers are required to live in suitable accommodation and any risk assessment should take account of whether care leavers feel safe in their accommodation and the area where it is located. Pathway Plans will set out where a young person may be vulnerable to exploitation, trafficking or going missing, and support services to minimise this risk should be put in place.

As Return Interviews will not be offered post 18 we will ensure that any care leaver who goes missing is seen within 5 working days (unless assessed as very high risk) by the Personal Advisor.

12. Reporting Procedures for Missing Looked After Children/Young People Peterborough Looked After Children who are placed within the City

The reporting process for a child who is looked after who is missing has to be influenced by the risk factors in the individual circumstance, e.g. age of child, risks, specific vulnerabilities etc.

All efforts to locate the child/young person must be recorded and available to audit.

If the child is considered **missing from a residential home**, staff from the residential home will, without delay, inform the police and within normal working hours the child/young person's social worker, the contact centre or if out of office hours the Emergency Duty Team. Residential staff will also inform the child/young person's school/college.

A decision will be made with the allocated worker about who will inform the parent/s and when.

If the child is considered **missing from their foster home**, the foster carer will, without delay, inform the police, the contact centre and the duty worker in the fostering team or if out of hours the Emergency Duty Team. The foster carer will also inform the child/young person's school/college. A decision will have already been made with the allocated worker about who will inform the parent/s and when.

In the case of a child missing from foster care, residential care or residential special school, the details should be recorded and made available to Ofsted in accordance with the requirements of the National Minimum Standards.

In the case of an asylum-seeking child, children's social care is required to notify UK Borders Agency (Ref. "*East of England Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) Safeguarding Protocol*")

Children's homes and the fostering teams will maintain a distinct log that records on a regular basis all unauthorised absences and missing from care episodes. A full record must be kept of all actions taken and messages received / given this could be used as evidence.

For residential staff they should make a note in the home's log of any action taken, messages received and cross reference it to the running log for Missing in Care. The running log for missing in care should be completed electronically and a full record of all action taken and messages noted on this.

The foster carers must record all unauthorised absences and missing from care episodes in their records log.

Please remember that after reporting a looked after child/young person as missing that, whilst all agencies share responsibility for the safeguarding of the child/young person, children's social care is responsible for children in their care and this responsibility is not absolved when they have made a report to the police.

Any child or young person who is missing for more than 24 hours will be reported to the Head of CLA, the Assistant Director of Children's Services via a 'Need to Know' notification. The Head of Quality Assurance will complete the Ofsted notification.

Should a child's absence continue after the matter has been reported to the police, the staff of the residential home/educational setting should make arrangements to inform all children and staff. In respect of children in foster care, a similar process needs to be undertaken by the foster carers. In this way, distressing rumours may be avoided and additional information may be gained regarding the missing child's whereabouts. Any relevant information should be passed to the police immediately.

13. Strategy Meetings (Missing)

Any looked after child missing for over 24 hours, must trigger a strategy meeting with all relevant agencies and staff, the outcome of which **MUST** be reported to the Head of CLA and the Assistant Director of Children's Services.

During the initial stages of the investigation it may be appropriate for the strategy review to be in the form of a phone call by police to relevant agencies. However, if the looked after child is still missing after a maximum of 5 days, or usually much sooner if there is a high risk factor, there should be a Follow up Strategy Discussion. This will be chaired by the relevant Head of Service.

It is a decision for the police, to advise the media regarding any missing child/young person.

The social worker will be informed before any publicity in order to advise the parents. However, there may be occasions where the decision to go to the press is immediately instigated by the police if the situation is deemed life threatening. All efforts will be made by the police to liaise with children's social care in the first instance or immediately after.

14. Placement Plan

When a child/young person becomes Looked After and there is information to suggest they might go missing, their Placement Plan should note this, include strategies for managing the risks and should be given to their carers. It should also be addressed at the Placement Agreement Meeting. This information must be shared with carers as it provides baseline information about the child's behaviour pattern and how to respond. This should be updated where appropriate whether the child remains in placement or moves to another placement. The Placement Plan will also be attached to Children's Social Care electronic data recording system ICS and should include the following:

- Describe the likelihood of the child/young person going missing;
- Detail the level of supervision and support the child/young person requires currently;
- Describe the likely level of risk to and by the child should the child go missing;
- Detail the parent's views on what action should be taken if the child/young person goes missing if applicable.

The social worker will ensure that the young person has this information explained to them so that they understand what actions will be taken if they go missing. This should be done both through discussion and written information.

Carers should be requested to obtain an up to date photograph of the child/young person once they move in, as the police will need this if they go missing.

Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's) should ensure this is reviewed at Child Care Reviews.

15. Looked After Children who are placed out of city that go missing

Peterborough City Council will ensure that the child's Placement Plan is as detailed as possible, including specific behaviour management strategies.

The care provider will be responsible for following their local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care procedures and should contact the Contact Centre in Peterborough to notify them of the missing episode.

The notification will be passed to the allocated Social Worker and Team Manager who will arrange for a Strategy Discussion to be held and a Return Interview to be carried out within 72 hours. The Return Interviews will be undertaken by NYAS

The host Local Authority should be notified of the outcome of the Return Interview.

An early CLA review may be convened to address issues for the child and placement.

16. Other Local Authority Looked After Children who go missing from placement in Peterborough

When a child/young person placed in Peterborough by another authority goes missing the registered manager or delegated senior of the children's home or fostering service is responsible for ensuring that the accountable manager in the child's placing authority receives notification that their looked after child has gone missing and that appropriate actions have been initiated.

The placing Local Authority must be informed within 1 working day of the child being notified as missing. Cambridgeshire Police will liaise with the Police in the child's placing Authority.

17. Looked After Children Going Missing During an External Activity

If a child becomes absent whilst on an external activity, the carer or member of staff in charge will:

- Arrange an initial search in the area the child went absent
- Notify local police
- Notify the child/young person's home police force that the child/young person is missing
- Notify the child's social worker or the accountable team manager, both locally and within the placing authority where applicable through the contact centre
- Notify the senior manager at the residential home (if applicable)
- Notify the Youth Offending Team if the child is on remand, on an order or curfew
- Notify the Emergency Duty Team (if applicable)

This protocol recognizes that schools, and residential schools and establishments also have complimentary protocols to follow. However following the steps above are the minimum responses expected and should be in addition to their protocols.

18. Police Powers

Police powers are often limited and difficulties can arise when missing children/young people are located, but do not wish to return to placement.

Section 46 of the Children Act 1989 empowers police officers to take a child/young person into Police Protection in prescribed circumstances i.e. when police have reasonable cause to believe that they would otherwise be likely to suffer significant harm, they may remove them to suitable accommodation and keep them there. Police officers, on exercising such powers, must contact Children's Social Care.

Home Office Circular 44/2003 gives guidance on the application of Section 46 (CA 1989) for children/young people who are subject to an order or requirement resulting from the criminal justice process or a secure order made in either civil or criminal proceedings and is absent from their placement without permission is an absconder (see Section 2.3). The police must be informed of the absence without delay and they will deal with the matter using appropriate powers under the relevant legislation.

19. Planning for Locating and/or the Return of a Child/Young Person

The police will conduct a "Safe and Well" check for ALL children/young people reported missing **as soon as possible and within 24 hours after their return**. This is with the small exception of those high level repeat missing persons who are looked after by professional carers within care homes and where these children are being managed through ongoing joint strategy meetings to discuss their ongoing risk, wellbeing and management. On these occasions due to the individuals being seen on a regular basis by officers and the report of their return being made by a professional it may be appropriate and more proportionate not to attend on each occasion. This will be in discussion with the

Child's carers at the residential care home and only where the behaviour is not out of character and there are no new concerns highlighted.

If a child/young person's absence comes within this protocol, the senior residential manager on duty within the home or the duty officer, in consultation with the social worker, police, carers and parents (where appropriate) should commence contingency planning for when the child/young person is located.

Such plans will include:

- The Return interview (within 72 hours of the child/young person returning) and determining the most appropriate way to ensure the child/young person is listened to; deciding where the interview should occur and who should carry this out. The timing for the interview may vary from child/young person depending on the circumstances at the time, discretion should be used and reason for any delay clearly recorded
- Giving the child/young person the opportunity to speak with someone independent of direct involvement, this person maybe an advocate or a social worker/police officer not directly involved with the child/young person. Ensuring that the child/young person is aware of his/her rights and access to an advocate
- Identify ways in which the child/young person can meaningfully inform and participate in the return plan, Consideration should be given to using an interpreter if English is not the first language

Deciding if the child/young person is to return to the previous placement?

- If returning to placement, deciding how he/she be conveyed there?
- Agreeing how and when the police see a child/young person on their return to undertake the "safe and well" check. The timing and process to do this will be based on the outcome of the discussion noted in point 1 but should be done within 24 hrs
- Plan and identify who will complete the **return to placement** interview. The message we give when a child/young person returns to the home is crucial in helping them build a sense of worth and belonging. Looking at what children/young people tell us, it is perhaps not the best time to ask questions about their whereabouts and actions whilst missing, this can be done at a later date. Care staff and foster carers will need to offer warm and consistent care when the young person returns - showing genuine concern for their safety and offering food and drink are very basic but powerful messages that we care and a positive way of welcoming the child/young person back home.
- It is usual for children's social care to make the arrangements for the transportation of the child/young person back to their placement. Where appropriate and subject to policing requirements at the time the police will assist. However the responsibility remains with children's social care
- Discussion should take place between children's social care and the police regarding their respective powers to enforce a return if the child/young person resists and is not apparently at risk. Children's social care legal

department should be consulted. If there is a failure to agree on a course of action then the Head of Social Care and the local police inspector will be consulted

- The police will work in partnership with the plan developed by children's social care to return a child/young person to his/her placement. If there are any allegations of abuse, or a suggestion that the child/young person has been a victim, or a perpetrator of any crime, the police need to be contacted immediately and they will consider implementing child protection procedures
- Due consideration must be given to the securing of evidence and possible forensic examination. This may include keeping any clothes the child/young person was wearing and/or sensitively discouraging bathing/showering and toileting where this can be managed appropriately. The police will advise on appropriate procedures to follow
- An early LAC review may be convened to address issues for the child and placement.

20. Assessment and Analysis of Missing from Care Episodes

Individual children:

An important part of supporting a child/young person is identifying patterns and themes arising from their missing from care episodes, analysis of information arising from each episode must form part of the ongoing work with the child/young person.

Once a child/young person returns consideration should be given to:

- The need for a multi-agency strategy meeting?
- The need for an early Child Care Review?
- Review any prevention/support work currently being undertaken with the child
- Child's Placement Plan on ICS should be updated.

Factors to consider:

- The likeliness of the child/young person continuing to go missing and any factors which may reduce this;
- Are there issues in relation to the placement meeting their needs, additional risks given adults and children they associate with and how can these be addressed;
- The level of supervision and support the child/young person requires currently;
- The likely level of risk should the child go missing and any additional action that should be taken.

21. Definition Unauthorised Absence (Out without Permission)

Where a child/young person's whereabouts is known, or thought to be known but is unconfirmed, and a risk assessment does not raise concerns for their immediate safety or that of the public, they are not considered to be 'missing' but to be 'out without permission/unauthorised absence.'

Some children and young people absent themselves for a short period and then return, with their whereabouts known to the carer. Sometimes children stay out longer than agreed, either on purpose to test boundaries, or accidentally. This kind of boundary testing activity is well within the range of normal teenage behaviour and should not come within the definition of "missing" as used within this protocol.

To cover these situations the category of unauthorised absence should be considered. Examples of situations where unauthorised absence will apply are:

- Running away after a dispute;
- Failing to return on time;
- They are communicating regularly with carers and there are no other reasons for concern.

22. Actions for Unauthorised Absences

If the child/young person does not return at the expected time, residential workers/ foster carers must take all reasonable steps to ascertain the child/young person's whereabouts and safety prior to contacting the police. In doing this, there should not be undue delay in proceeding from what is expected of a reasonable parental response and contacting the Police.

The degree of urgency will be determined by the age and maturity of the child/young person, understanding and past history taking into account any previous missing episodes. This also applies to many vulnerable children with a statement of special educational needs including being placed in a residential special school. In cases of high vulnerability or risk all absences should be treated as missing and the protocol followed

Young people who regularly go out without permission should be subject to a strategy meeting to agree an individual plan of action.

23. Reporting Procedures for Unauthorised Absence of Looked After Children (Out without Permission)

Foster Carers (Unauthorised Absence)

Foster carers should contact the police in the first instance and then the contact centre and the child/young person's social worker and if out of hours, the Emergency Duty Team. The decision will then be made if the absence is unauthorised or falls under missing from care, taking into consideration the factors determining the child/young person's vulnerability and any potential danger to the public. A decision will be made with the Team Manager about who will inform the parent/s and when. The fostering team duty worker/out of hours help line should also be contacted.

Children's Homes (Unauthorised Absence)

Within residential homes, the team and senior manager on duty should be informed immediately of a child/young person going missing. The decision will be made if the absence is unauthorised or falls under 'missing' procedures, taking into consideration the factors determining the child/young person's vulnerability and any potential danger to the public. Information regarding events and actions will be recorded and sent through to the contact centre and to the allocated social worker.

Further Action (Unauthorised Absence)

The team and senior manager on duty within the residential home, or the child's social worker or the duty officer will consider whether the absence causing such concern is to fall within the missing procedures. If it does not, and the young person is considered to be out without permission the residential team and manager or the duty officer should take

whatever steps are required and appropriate to ensure that the child/young person returns to the establishment or the home without undue delay. In responses such as these the Emergency Duty Team should be notified by email for information in case of any further events e.g. at the location where the young person has been seen.

Children's social care will ensure that they have recorded all reasonable steps taken to ascertain the child/young person's whereabouts and safety.

If there is reason to believe a risk has materialised or the child has not returned or not been communicated with or not seen within **four hours** (*or sooner*) of any existing agreement between carer and child, in consultation with the child's social worker serious consideration, must be given to reporting them as missing to the police immediately. **Six hours, should be regarded as the maximum time** of the young person having not returned, been communicated with or seen. In many cases a shorter period will be more appropriate and is dependent on a number of aggravating factors, such as time of day/night, any medication etc.

Any unauthorised absence lasting a *maximum of six hours*, irrespective of whether the child has been seen or spoken with, should be reported to the Head of Service CLA by the relevant manager of the children's home, fostering service or emergency duty team out of hours. Parents must be informed as agreed.

24. Strategy Meetings (Unauthorised Absence)

Any unauthorised absence lasting up to a maximum of 5 days, i.e, whereabouts are known but he/she has not returned to their placement, must trigger a strategy meeting with all relevant agencies and staff, the outcome of which **MUST** be reported to the Head of Service for CLA and the Assistant Director for Children's Social Care by way of a 'Need to Know.' Ofsted must also be made aware at the point at which a strategy meeting is held. This notification will be completed by the Head of Quality Assurance

25. Monitoring - Cambridgeshire-Wide Information on Missing Children

Cambridgeshire Police collect information about missing children on the Compact database. The police will provide Children's Social Care with weekly reports of children who have been reported missing and the outcomes for those children.

The Police through their analysts are a good source of data base information to highlight trends and any possible action that may be needed.

Information regarding missing episodes will be monitored though the Peterborough Operation Meeting and by the Local Safeguarding Children Board through their quality assurance process.

26. 'Regulation 33' Checks of Residential Children's Homes

Regular monitoring of restraint procedures, accident reports and missing from care records will be monitored as part of the Head of Care supervision agenda. Children's social care will also monitor this as part of their quality assurance audit cycle. Following this, all findings from the audits will form part of ongoing training and will contribute to updating policies and procedures.

27. Bibliography

- Dept for Children, Schools and Families (2009 July) Statutory Guidance on children who run away and go missing from home or care supporting local authorities to meet the requirements of National Indicator 71 missing from home and care";
- Missing Children & Adults - A cross-Government Strategy (Home Office Dec. 2011);
- The All Party Parliamentary Group for Runaway and Missing Children and the APPG for
- Looked After Children and Care Leavers - 'Report from the Joint Inquiry into Children who go Missing from Care (June 2012).

28. Other Useful Guidance

- Dept for Children, Schools and Families (2009) Statutory Guidance (revised) for Local
- Authorities in England to identify Children not receiving a Suitable Education. London **Department for Education**;
- Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009) Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation. Supplementary Guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications (now archived);
- HM Government (2009) Multi Agency Practice Guidance. Handling Cases of Forced Marriage. **Foreign and Commonwealth Office**;
- HM Government (2008) **Safeguarding Children who may have been trafficked**;
- HM Government, **Information Sharing: Guide for Practitioners and Managers (2008)**; a pocket guide is also available at **Department for Education** ref: DCSF-00808-2008;
- Children Missing Education: the role of the local authority in identifying and addressing children missing from home or care (Peterborough);
- **East of England Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) Safeguarding Protocol (2010)**;
- Suffolk Safeguarding Board Safeguarding Children who Run Away and go missing from Home or Care - policy, procedures and practice guidance (March 2010).

29. Helplines - Information

Missing People

Missing People provides support for missing children, vulnerable adults and families left in limbo. Through the **Runaway Helpline**, the charity provides crisis-support to any young person who has run away from home or care, or been forced to leave. The service is 24/7, free, confidential and can be contacted via Freephone 0800 800 7070, by emailing runaway@missingpeople.org.uk and also by texting 80234.

Missing People also helps local authorities to find young people missing from home or care. The charity can provide liaison and publicity opportunities, including national media partners, to aid the safe return of a child. Missing People accepts referrals from any agency or carer involved with a missing child as long as the case has already been reported to police. A straightforward media consent form will need to be signed by whoever has parental responsibility.

To contact Missing People about a missing child, email: services@missingpeople.org.uk or call 0871 222 50 55.

Childline

Childline is a free confidential telephone helpline providing counselling service for children and young people run by the NSPCC. The phone number is 0800 1111.

Get Connected

Get Connected is a free, national helpline for any young person under 25 facing any issue, giving each young person the emotional support they need to work out what they want to do about their situation, and the information they need to choose the most appropriate help.

Get Connected holds details of over 13,000 different services and allows the young person to make their own decisions at their own pace. They then connect them, free, to their chosen service.

In the case of a young person who has run away or been thrown out of home, they can explore their accommodation options, including friends, family, social services, refuges/hostels or returning home. If the young person wants to find help with any other issues, Get Connected can also put them in touch with services such as counselling, advice, drop-in centres and practical help.

Phone: 0808 808 4994 (1pm-11pm every day)

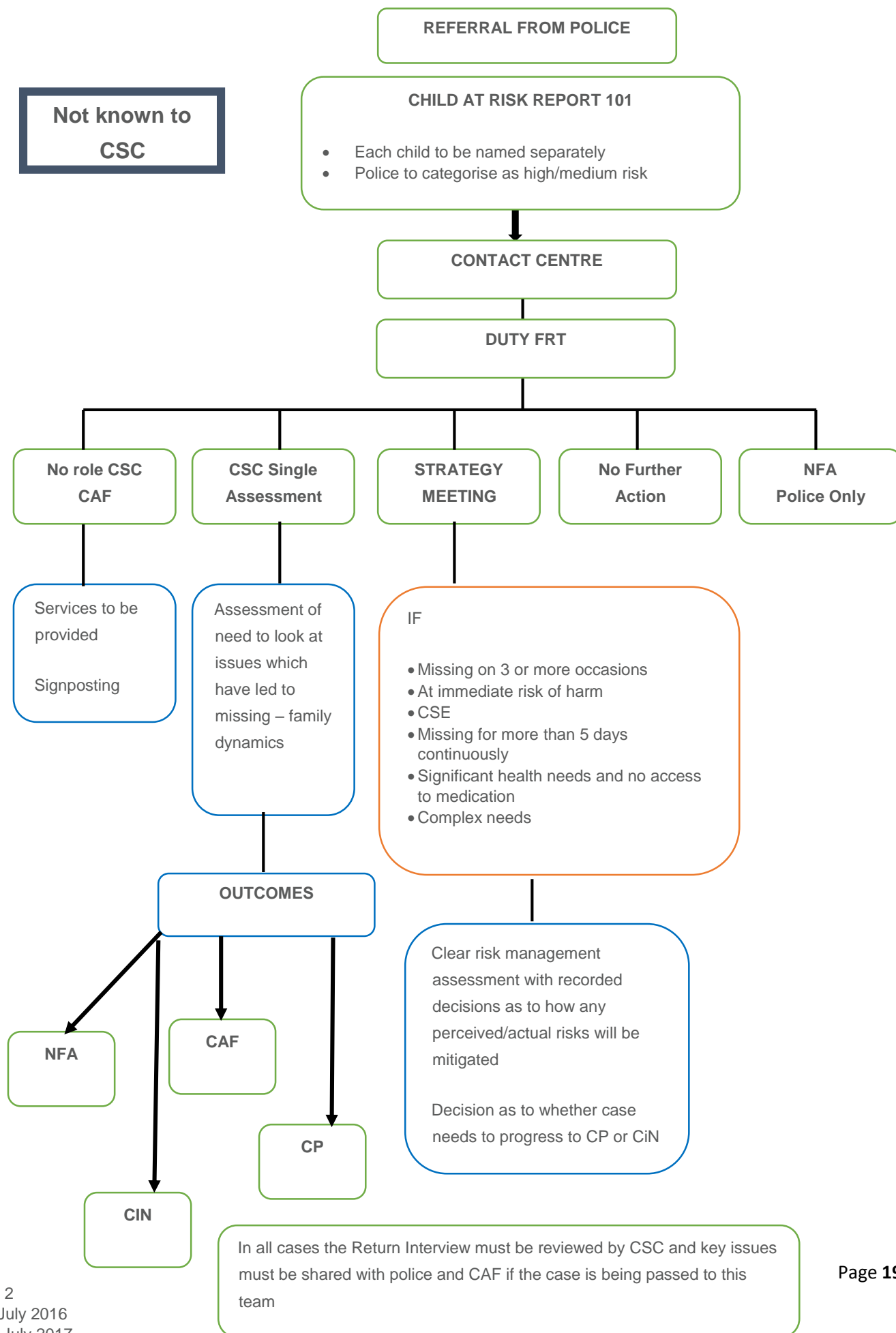
Email: help@getconnected.org.uk

Webchat: **Get Connected** (7pm-10pm every day) **Get Connected website**

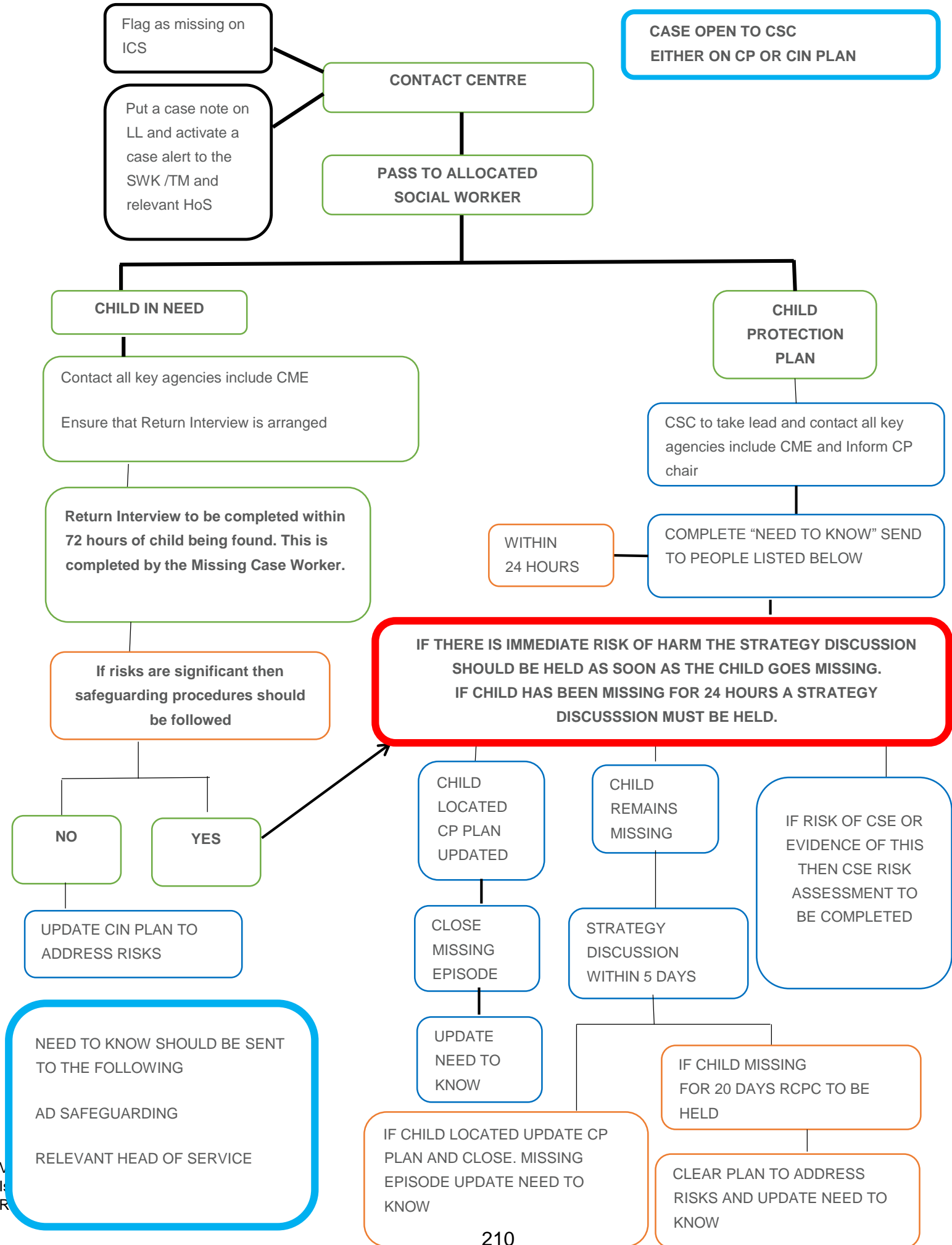
FRANK

FRANK telephone line and website (**Talk To Frank**) is the joint DCSF, Department of Health and Home Office drugs advice and information campaign for young people: 0800 77 66 00.

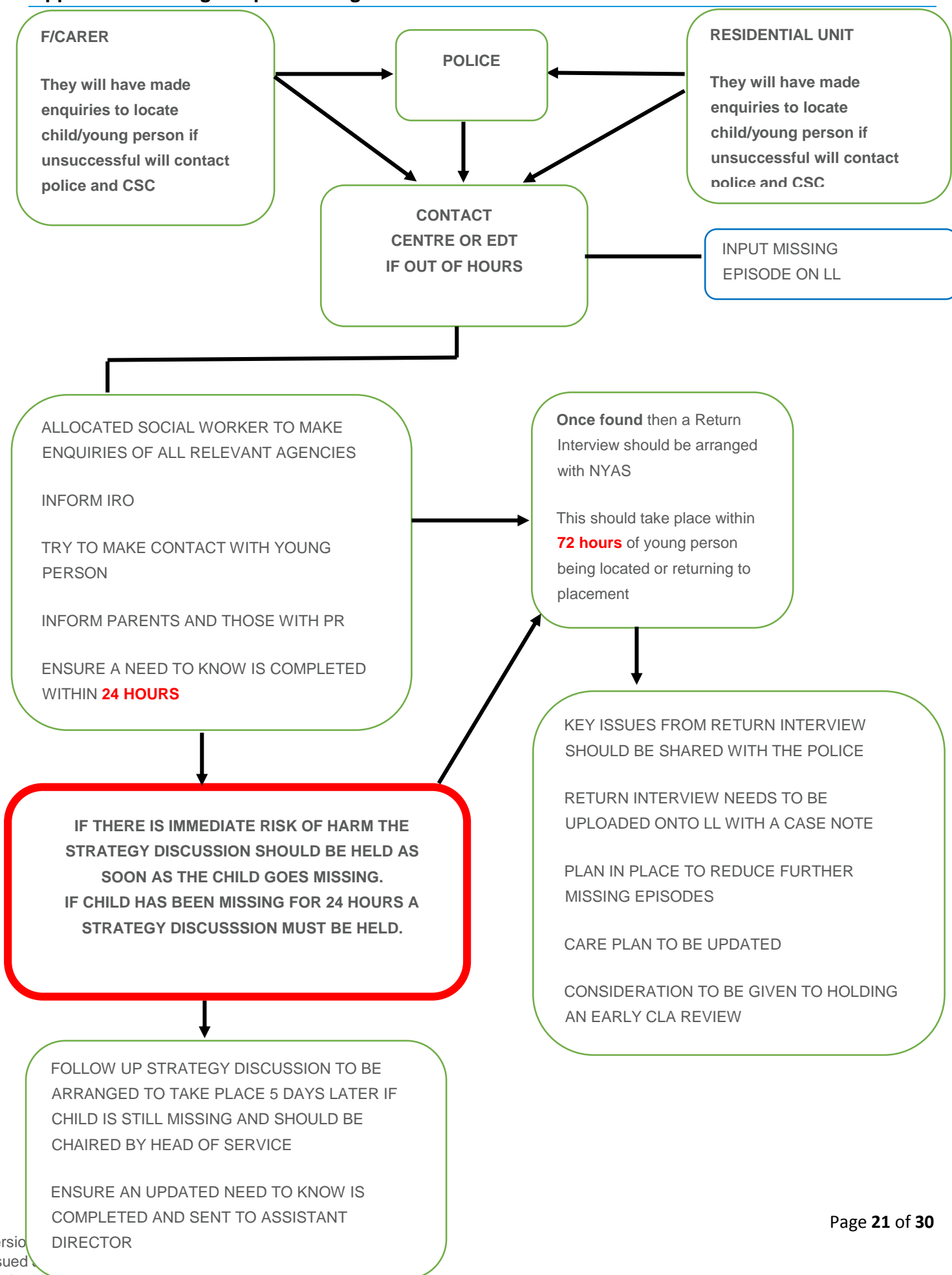
Appendix 1: Young People Missing from Home (Not Known to CSC) Flowchart



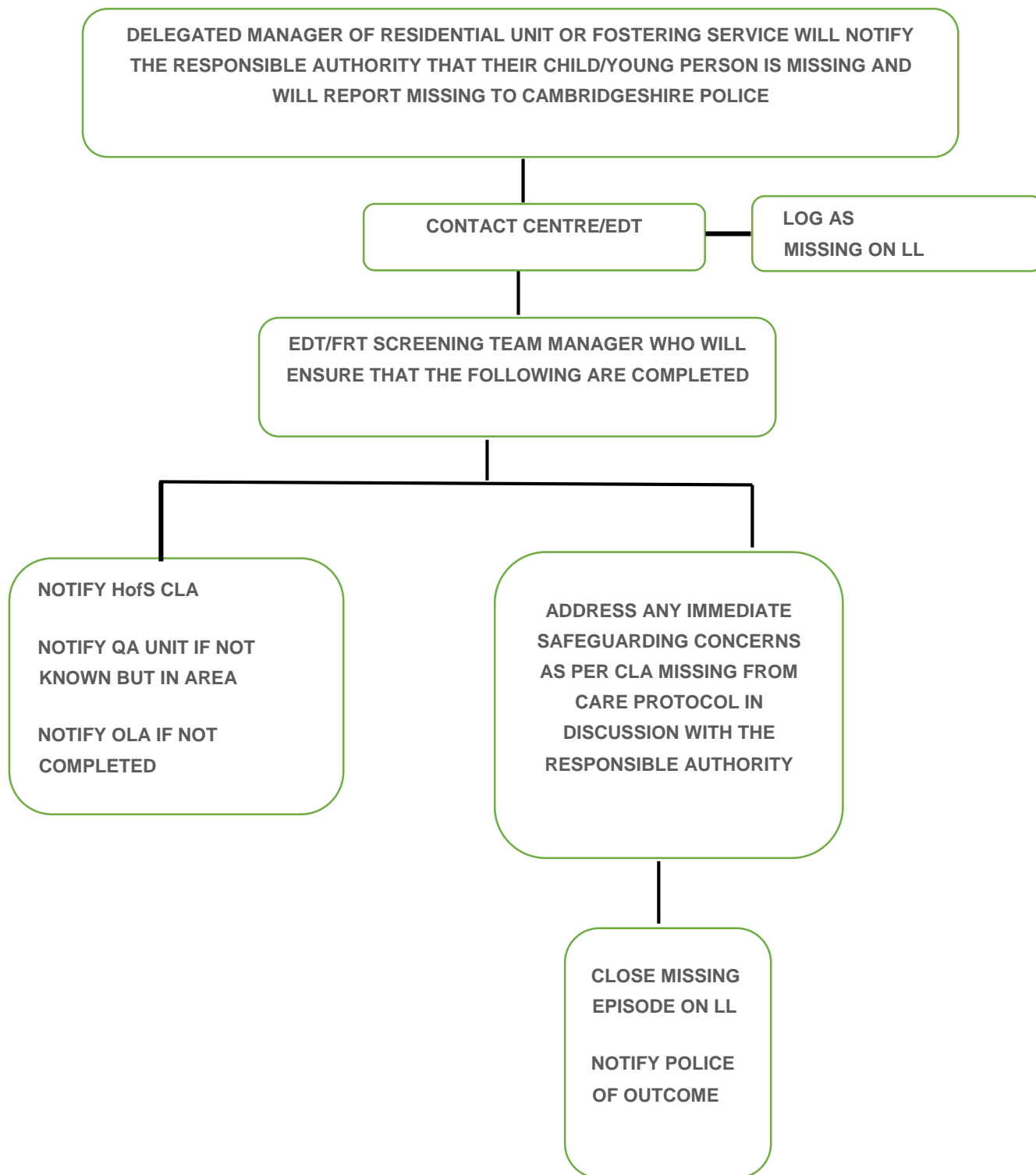
Appendix 2: Young People Missing from Home (Known to CSC) Flowchart




Appendix 3: Young People Missing from Care Flowchart



Appendix 4: Young Person Missing from Care from another Local Authority Flowchart



Appendix 5 Return Home Interview Form

Peterborough City Council System Administration			
Tel: Fax:			
Missing Person Episode Details Details of Child:			
Family Name		Given Name	
Actual DOB		Gender	
Ethnicity		Primary Language	
Primary Address		Telephone	
		Mobile	
		Case Number	
Secondary Address		Current Address	
Date Reported Missing			
Date/Time Missing			
Date Form Commenced			
Date Form Completed			
Was the Return Interview completed within 72 hours?		Yes or No	
If no, please explain why			
Police Log No.			
Have there been previous concerns about Child Sexual Exploitation?		Yes or No	
If yes, please provide further details			
Is the young person involved in criminal or anti-social activities?		Yes or No	
If yes, please provide further details			
Does the young person have contact with people who are known to pose a risk to children or young people?		Yes or No	
If yes, please provide further details			

Does the young person have any mental health needs?	Yes or No
If yes, please provide further details	
Does the young person have a learning disability?	Yes or No
If yes, please provide further details	
Are there any other factors that are likely to increase this young person's vulnerability?	Yes or No
If yes, Please provide further details	
Has the child/young person gone missing or been reported as absent before?	Yes or No
If yes, how many times?	
Summarise the main features of those previous missing/absent incidents	
Circumstances in which child/young person was found (include names of anyone found with them and address where located)	
Return Interview	
What happened to make you go missing? (Planned, bored, something happened, to get away...)	

What happened whilst you were missing? (Where did you go, who were you with, any trouble, anybody else saw you/met you, how did you get back, how did you feel?)	
How did you get back home/to placement?	
Any concerns/issues raised by the young person?	
What might stop you going missing again?	
Was there anything different about this missing episode?	
Details of person co-ordinating return interview and any other persons present	
Date form forwarded to your police divisional representative	
I (name of the young person)	
Consent to this form being shared with (details)	

Name of Child / Young Person	
Signature	
Manager Oversight	
Analysis	
Action Plan	
Authorisation Date	

Appendix 6: Need to Know Template

CONFIDENTIAL

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE NEED TO KNOW BRIEFING

To: Wendi Ogle-Welbourn Corporate Director People and Communities
 Lou Williams Service Director Children and Safeguarding
 Nicola Curley Assistant Director Children's Social Care
 Alison Bennett Head of Service Safeguarding
 Relevant HoS Head of Service

cc:

From:		Role:	
Location:			
Contact Details:			

Subject of Need to Know:			
ICS No.:		Name:	
DoB:		Role:	
Address:			

Incident of issue: <i>[Reason for informing the director]</i>

Background:

Include for example the nature of the department's involvement, names and roles of staff involved, legal status of the child, child protection registration status, previous related incidents etc.

Current situation:

Include for example current situation of the child or member of staff and the risk this poses; other agencies involved etc.

Manager comment:

Include risk assessment and actions to mitigate the risk; statutory, corporate and departmental procedures being followed etc. Statutory notifications completed (Ofsted, HSE etc.) Managerial overview.

Lines to take:

Suggest a statement for elected members or lines to take in relation to media interest

--

Future Action:

For example, the next stages in a child protection investigation, forthcoming court appearances, action to be taken if a missing child returns, business continuity plans in relation to premises issues etc.

--

Next Update:

When is the expected and for what reason.

--

UPDATE:	
Date:	

From:		Role:	
Location:			
Contact Details:			

<p>Update Information:</p> <p><i>Include all changes since the initial 'need to know' previous update, including manager comment, lines to take and future action as appropriate.</i></p>

Next Update Due:	
Incident Concluded:	