

<b>Report for:</b>	<b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee 10 April 2014</b>	<b>Item Number:</b>	
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<b>Title:</b>	Progress Update on the Recommendations made in the Scrutiny Review of Children Missing from Care and Home
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<b>Report Authorised by:</b>	<p>LISA REDFERN</p> <p><b>Lisa Redfern Director, Children's Services (Acting)</b></p>
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<b>Lead Officer:</b>	<b>Elaine Redding Assistant Director (Interim) Children and Families</b>
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<b>Ward(s) affected:</b> All	<b>Report for Non Key Decision</b>
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**1. Describe the issue under consideration**

To update Members on the recommendations made in the Scrutiny Review of Children Missing from Care and Home in April 2012 which were agreed by Cabinet on 10 July 2012.

**2. Recommendations**

That Overview and Scrutiny Committee note and agree the update found in Appendix 1.

**3. Alternative options considered**

NA

#### **4. Background information**

5.1 The Committee commissioned a review of Children Missing from Care and from Home. The review was set up as a result of a recommendation from the Scrutiny Review of Corporate Parenting and in response to concerns that were raised in respect of missing children. It focused on three specific categories of missing children and young people:

- children missing from the Council's care;
- children missing from the care of other local authorities who have been placed in Haringey; and
- children missing from home.

5.2 The review noted the differences that exist in practices and procedures for dealing with these different categories and which reflect their different circumstances.

##### *Terms of Reference*

5.3 The Terms of Reference for the review were as follows:

“To consider how the Council and its partners respond to instances where children or young people run away from home and from the Council's care and, in particular, its policies, procedures, practices and performance”.

5.4 In undertaking the review, the Panel considered:

- Research documentation, national guidance and targets;
- Statistical evidence including relevant performance data and benchmarking;
- Comparison with other areas such as statistical neighbours; and
- Interviews with a range of stakeholders.

5.5 Evidence was received from a range of stakeholders including:

- Haringey Children and Young People's Service;
- First Response Team;
- Police Missing Persons Unit;
- Barnardo's MissU Project; and
- residential care providers and private fostering agencies; and
- foster carers.

#### **5. Comments of the Chief Finance Officer and financial implications** NA

#### **6. Head of Legal Services and legal implications**

6.1 The Assistant Director Corporate Governance has been consulted on the contents of this report.

6.2 The Department for Education has issued new Statutory Guidance on Children who run away or go missing from home or care (January 2014). The Council must comply with this guidance unless local circumstances indicate exceptional reasons

to depart from it. The guidance sets out the roles and responsibilities of local authorities and Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB) to prevent children from going missing and to protect them when they do.

6.3 The guidance requires local authorities to “name a senior children’s service manager as responsible for monitoring policies and performance relating to children who go missing from home or care. The responsible manager should look beyond this guidance to understand the risks and issues facing children missing from home or care and to review best practice in dealing with the issue”.

6.4 Also, local authorities are expected to agree with local police and other partners a protocol for dealing with children who run away or go missing in their area. The protocol should be agreed and reviewed regularly with all agencies and be scrutinised by the LSCB.

**7. Equalities and Community Cohesion Comments**

NA

**8. Head of Procurement Comments**

NA

**9. Policy Implication**

NA

**10. Reasons for Decision**

NA

**11. Use of Appendices**

Appendix 1: Recommendations and Update

Appendix 2: Monthly Statistical Report

**12. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

NA

## Action Plan for implementing the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of Corporate Parenting

No	Recommendation	Service Response	Update
1	That the Council continue to monitor and report progress in supporting and protecting young runaways through the use of National Indicator 71 (paragraph 3.11).	<p>The Quality Assurance sub group of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board will review the criterion for the self assessment required for this indicator and set out how it will be reported to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB).</p> <p><b>Lead: Myra O'Farrell</b> Assistant Director (Interim), Quality Assurance and LSCB Management</p>	<p>Each local area had to self-assess on the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• local information about running away is gathered;</li> <li>• local needs analyses, based on gathered information, are in place;</li> <li>• local procedures to meet the needs of runaways are agreed;</li> <li>• protocols for responding to urgent/out of hours referrals from police or other agencies are in place; and</li> <li>• local procedures include effective needs assessment protocols, to support effective prevention / intervention work.</li> </ul> <p>The new pan-London Guidance Part B consultation ended on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2014 – section B3 part 4 includes the new Missing from Home and care guidance with the publication of the final 5th edition by Spring 2014.</p> <p>There has been a specific review of National Indicator 71 as described above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• numbers of runaways are captured in the LSCB dataset; and</li> <li>• a weekly discussion is held between the Director Children's Services and the Lead Member where the full details and level of risk are discussed. This issue is taken extremely seriously.</li> </ul>

			The 2006 Pan-London procedures were due for review by the best practice sub group this year but were deferred due to the delay in new London guidance being published.
2	That, when available, the Council give specific consideration to signing up to the Children's Society's runaways charter (3.13).	When the charter is published it will be presented to the Cabinet Member for Children to consider on behalf of the Council.	<p>Consideration was given to the Charter at the Joint Meeting of Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee and Children's Safeguarding Policy and Practice Committee on 29 October 2012.</p> <p>The consensus among Committee members was that the main priority should be keeping children safe and as statutory guidance and Pan London procedures were being followed in respect of children missing from care they were satisfied that adherence to a separate charter, that would require allocation of additional resources, was not needed.</p>
3	That, in order to enhance monitoring of progress, action in respect of children missing from both home and from care to be included within the LCSB Annual Report (5.5).	<p>The QA sub group will monitor as part of their QA role of the safeguarding dataset and data and commentary will be included in the LCSB annual report.</p> <p><b>Lead: Angela Bent</b> LSCB Business Manager</p>	<p>The LCSB dataset 2013/14 has a number of missing indicators including:</p> <p>a) <b>Number of children missing/ absconded from care at any point in the month;</b> and</p> <p>b) <b>Numbers of missing children [police]</b> This data is supplied from the police and will include those missing from home as well. Urgent work is required to ensure that both systems are aligned within 2013/4</p> <p>The LCSB annual report 2013/14 will include the data and commentary.</p>
4	That the Council consider, in	In line with the London Safeguarding Board	Since April 2013, police forces have been rolling

<p>consultation with partners, the setting of a finite time limit for unauthorised absences of children and young people (5.15).</p>	<p>Procedures and as set out in the missing from care protocol any unauthorised absence in excess of 24 hours is reported to the Head of Service. For all children and young people where there is a history of going missing or who are likely to have unauthorised absences a risk assessment takes place at the point of placement and a plan developed. This plan is reviewed at the Placement Planning meeting which takes place within 5 days of the placement and at subsequent Looked After Child reviews.</p> <p><b>Lead: Chris Chalmers</b> Head of Service, Children in Care</p>	<p>out new definitions of ‘missing’ and ‘absent’ in relation to children / young people and adults reported as missing to the police. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Missing</i>: Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be the subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another; and</li> <li>• <i>Absent</i>: A person is not at a place where they are expected or required to be.</li> </ul> <p><b>Looked after children (LAC) who are missing or absent</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Looked after child (LAC) missing from their placement</i>: Where a looked after child is missing from their placement, and his/her whereabouts are not known and/or the child is known or suspected to be at risk or considered to be at risk they should be reported to the police as missing and a record of this should be made.</li> <li>2. <i>Looked after children (LAC) absent from their placement without authorisation</i>: Where a looked after child is not in their placement as agreed, their whereabouts are known and they are not at risk, carers/local authorities need to record as absent without authorisation from their placement.</li> </ol> <p>Most of the young people who are “missing” from placement fall into the second category above, although with some there may be risk factors related to the address they are staying at even where it is known and these are assessed on a</p>
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			case by case basis.
5	That the Children and Young People's Service, the Police and other relevant partners work together to explore how data and statistical information on missing children and young people can be better consolidated electronically and quality improved. (5.20).	<p>The implementation of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub provides the opportunity to review how data is gathered and shared. All children missing from home are logged centrally on FWI and a report run weekly. This information is passed to the Barnardo's MissU worker for action.</p> <p><b>Lead: Marie Bell</b> Head of Service (Interim)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At point of contact (screening) a child missing from home/care will be recorded on Framework-i on the open allocated case for data to be gathered.</li> <li>• Should the case not be open it is logged as a contact/referral and reviewed by a manager.</li> <li>• At the point of the referral moving to a child and family assessment a missing child can again be logged for data collection.</li> <li>• The LSCB's scorecard gives data around missing children reported by the police.</li> <li>• Given the concerns around the links between children running away and the risks of sexual exploitation (CSE) and studies showing that child sexual exploitation is much more prevalent than previously thought, a Haringey Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation Group (MASE) has been developed not only to look at cases but to discuss data, themes, hotspots, identify and map problems and patterns as well as concerns about any individuals to whom children runaway to be with or involvement in drugs, gangs or criminal activity, and trafficking. The service is looking into implementing a specific flag on open cases where missing children at risk of CSE are processed to MASE.</li> </ul> <p>Expectations of the screening team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• refer to the Department for Education</li> </ul>

			<p>statutory guidance June 2013 issued under Section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand the difference between missing and absent;</li> <li>• be aware of Runaway and Missing from Home or Care protocols;</li> <li>• be aware of the 'hidden missing' - children who have not been reported missing to the police, but have come to an agency's attention from having accessed other services;</li> <li>• work with the police to risk assess cases of children missing or absent from home and analyse data for patterns that indicate particular concerns and risks;</li> <li>• be clear about risk levels; and</li> <li>• be aware of what support services are available for children and young people before, during or after running away.</li> </ul>
6	<p>That risk assessments are updated automatically and as a matter of routine whenever children or young people go missing (5.29).</p>	<p>Protocol requires that Risk assessments must be placed on file at the beginning of each child or young person's placement. This includes relevant information regarding their current contacts, whether or not their social relationships have changed and what new risks might therefore be present.</p> <p>A strategy meeting is arranged as soon as the Young Person is reported missing with the Police Missing Person' Unit and a joint professional assessment undertaken of the</p>	<p>The process for missing children is already clearly set out in the July 2012 Action Plan. In addition a new tool has been launched to assess those at risk of sexual exploitation. This will be used in all situations where this might be a factor.</p>

		<p>risks to the young person with a clear plan, which includes the individual roles and responsibilities of those involved in the recovery of the young person.</p> <p><b>Lead: Chris Chalmers</b> Head of Service, Children in Care</p>	
7	<p>That C&amp;YPS work with foster carers to develop improved information sharing where there is a high risk of a young person going missing through the use of a suitable pro forma to record the information necessary to assist the Police, including provision of a recent photograph (6.18).</p>	<p>The service has worked with foster carers and the provider forum, which has representatives from the Independent agencies and police missing persons unit, to review the information that is shared when a young person is reported missing. A flowchart for staff guidance has been produced and a proforma to gather information which includes a photo of the child, these are available to staff and foster carers.</p> <p><b>Lead: Paul McCarthy</b> Head of Service (Acting) Resources and Placements (Children in Care)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster carers are required to have a recent good quality photograph of every child for whom they care. Independent Fostering Association foster carers are also required to do this. .</li> <li>• Placement Plans address actions and strategies where there is a known risk of absconding or going missing from placement.</li> <li>• Foster carers are required to maintain up to date details of family members and friends of young people so that they can be contacted in the event of a young person going missing.</li> </ul>
8	<p>That action be taken to improve support for foster carers after children or young people in their care have returned after going missing and, as part of this, all incidents be followed up by social workers to provide reassurance for carers that the situation is being monitored and, where appropriate, action being taken.(6.24).</p>	<p>The missing form care and home procedure has been updated to reflect the expectation that social workers contact children/young people and carers when the child/young person returns following an absence with out permission or missing episode. A series of work shops focusing on working with children who are at risk of going missing is being developed and the programme will be delivered during</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training has been provided to foster carers.</li> <li>• Support groups address carers' concerns and support them in taking the correct action when young people go missing or are considered at risk of going missing.</li> <li>• The relevant sections of the Fostering Handbook have been revised and updated.</li> <li>• Regularity of supervising social worker visits has been increased from a minimum of 6</li> </ul>

		<p>October and November 2012 to support staff and carers in their understanding of the issues and procedures.</p> <p><b>Lead: Paul McCarthy</b> Head of Service (Acting) Resources and Placements (Children in Care)</p>	<p>weekly to 4 weekly with effect from 1.4.14</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An out of hours fostering duty service is now provided by the Fostering Service so that foster carers can obtain out of hours advice and support if a foster child goes missing.</li> <li>• Annual reviews of approval address how well foster carers deal with the challenge of children going missing or absconding.</li> </ul>
9	<p>The Panel recommends that work be undertaken with the out of hours service provider to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all reports of missing children or young people are followed up appropriately and foster carers are kept informed of progress; and</li> <li>• information is appropriately recorded and accessible to operatives so that callers do not need to fully repeat details of incidents that have previously been reported (6.25).</li> </ul>	<p>Where children and Young People have been reported missing by day time services a referral is completed, out of hours services alerted and plan for return placed on the Young Person child's file. When the Young Person is returned all appropriate lead agencies are informed by either the out of hours service or the day time worker.</p> <p>Currently all calls to the Out of Hours Service are initially received by Haringey's call handling centre Vangent. This inevitably results in some duplication of information.</p> <p><b>Lead: Marie Bell</b> Head of Service (Interim)</p>	<p>Duplication now minimised but further work is still being undertaken with Customer Service Transformation to further enhance these systems.</p>

10	<p>That the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) within C&amp;YPS works with schools and, in particular, the faith community to raise the profile of the issue, including training for designated teachers (7.11).</p>	<p>The LSCB and the LADO and staff from CYPS work with the designated teacher network and faith groups to raise awareness of safeguarding issues. The issues relating to missing children and their role in reducing risk for these young people will be highlighted in future events.</p> <p><b>Lead: Myra O'Farrell</b> Assistant Director (Interim), Quality Assurance and LSCB Management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) no longer undertakes training with schools as they have their own training.</li> </ul>
11	<p>That action is taken to confirm that all children and young people who go missing from care and from home are offered an independent return home interview on the basis outlined in the pan London procedures, with any shortfall identified met through the commissioning by C&amp;YPS of additional capacity from an appropriate third sector organisation and that this be subject to regular monitoring and evaluation to ensure its cost effectiveness.</p>	<p>The London procedures recommend that: <i><u>The child must receive the interview with the independent person within 72 hours of being located or returning from absence</u></i> <i>The independent person could be a social worker other than the child's social worker, if they have one, or a teacher, school nurse, Connexions, Youth or YOT Worker, a voluntary sector practitioner or a police officer whom the child knows and trusts. The independent interview should be with someone the child trusts and who is separate from the police and children's social services interview. The child should be asked who they wish to speak to.</i></p> <p>For looked after children it is the responsibility of children's services to ensure that an independent interview is offered, for children living in the community it the responsibility of the police and</p>	<p>Independent return to care interviews are always offered. There is a clear protocol in place which we have been operating to with regard to children in care since December 2012. This has assisted the service in furthering the objectives in recommendation 13 below. The protocol is as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A young person is reported to allocated social worker as missing from care – this notification can be from a variety of sources e.g. police notifications (these come from First Response), Emergency Duty Team, foster carers, residential social workers.</li> <li>2. The young person's allocated social worker notifies their manager and Deputy Head of Service, Children in Care (CiC), and enters the episode on Framework-i (FWi).</li> <li>3. The young person's allocated social worker completes the return to care interview referral, passes this to the Deputy Head of Service, CiC, and enters on FWi.</li> </ol>

		<p>children's services.  Police Missing Person's Unit meet with all Young People who have been returned following an episode of being missing. This interview includes a face to face meeting with the missing person and an exploration of the reasons for absence are explored to include potential risk from others.  Local procedures will be reviewed with partner agencies and with Youth and Community Partnership to ensure that were appropriate an interview with an independent person is offered to a young person.</p> <p><b>Lead: Chris Chalmers</b>  Head of Service (Children in Care)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. The Deputy Head of Service forwards the referral to the Youth, Community and Participation (YCP) administrator and the team leaders; a YCP practitioner will be allocated.</li> <li>5. The practitioner will let the allocated social worker know who to contact when the young person returns.</li> <li>6. When the young person returns/is returned, the allocated social worker will contact the practitioner to discuss arrangements for the interview (may or may not involve a meeting depending on complexity of the situation).</li> <li>7. Practitioner will hold an interview with young person within 48 hours of being informed of young person's return`.</li> <li>8. Record of the return to care interview e-mailed to the Deputy Head of Service, CiC who will enter on FWi.</li> <li>9. YCP practitioner and allocated social worker have de-brief session.</li> <li>10. Data collected from the return to care interview to be evaluated by Deputy Head of Service, CiC / allocated social worker/ team manager/ independent reviewing officer, and changes to care planning carried forward and recorded on FWi. YCP practitioner to be kept informed of progress.</li> <li>11. Outcome of the return to care interview is entered by the Deputy Head of Service, Children in Care on the weekly missing from care return.</li> </ol>
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12	That residential care providers be requested to confirm that arrangements are in place for all Haringey children who are placed out-of-borough and go missing to receive an independent interview (8.20).	<p>Where children and Young People are placed out of borough the arrangements reflect to protocol and arrangements of the Local Authority in which they are living. Providers forums are held to ensure compliance with this.</p> <p><b>Lead: Paul McCarthy</b> Head of Service (Acting) Resources and Placements (Children in Care)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Placement agreements and placement contracts with residential care providers specify this requirement.</li> <li>• Compliance is checked through regular placement monitoring meetings by the Placements Officers.</li> </ul>
13	That C&YPS should seek to gain a greater understanding of the 'push' factors behind running away from Council care and seek to develop and deliver a strategy to address them. (8,21)	<p>Tighter monitoring of the effectiveness of placements is contributing to a far more cohesive approach to tackle issues which might cause young people to run away from Council care. Incidences of unauthorised absence are much more likely where a young person is not engaged with their carers and additionally feels a strong sense of connection to their birth family or other significant social contacts.</p> <p>Current joint approaches involve IROs, the placements team, foster or residential carers and the social work team with case responsibility for the young person. The use of an independent interview process on the young person's return to care assists in providing a fuller picture of the motivating factors behind their desire to get away from their placement. There are comprehensive local and national</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A combination of tighter placement monitoring and use of return to care interviews has been instrumental in reducing the number of children going missing.</li> <li>• One clear factor in repeated episodes of absconding is often that the young people are keen to return to Haringey to be near to their birth family members. One outcome of the return interviews has been that this issue has been highlighted, leading to some decisions regarding either return home to family (maybe an aunt or grandparent if parents are not appropriate) or a more local foster/residential unit.</li> <li>• There has been a steady decline in numbers of children going missing and weekly reporting to the DCS and Lead Member confirms this.</li> </ul>

		procedures which underpin this work. <b>Lead: Chris Chalmers</b> Head of Service (Children in Care)	
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