

Nottingham City Social Care Local Practice Guidance

'Children Who Go Missing from Home, Care or Education'

<http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/article/23729/Safeguarding-Children-Procedures-and-Practice-Guidance-Documents>

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i) Introduction.

Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Council's have agreed a joint protocol under the Local Safeguarding Children Boards to guide practitioners in how to support and safeguard children who may run away from home for very short periods and for longer periods. The guidance is available at the link below:

<http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/article/23729/Safeguarding-Children-Procedures-and-Practice-Guidance-Documents>

The primary aim of this document is to assist practitioners across all agencies to develop robust responses to children who go missing. The document follows existing national guidance concerning children who go missing.

In Nottingham City, the implementation and development of this protocol is overseen by the Missing Children Task & delivery Group of the NCSCB.

This document is to give an overview of responsibilities for Nottingham City social care practitioners pertaining to the local missing children protocol.

'Children who are missing from home may be at risk of harm as a consequence of their basic need for food, safety and shelter and/or from the people with whom they may come into contact with. Risks can include physical harm, sexual exploitation, drug abuse and involvement in a range of other criminal activities. Additional vulnerability due to their age, level of understanding or the significance and seriousness of the circumstances that led to the missing episode may also be present.'

(NCSCB '*Children Who Go Missing from Home, Care or Education Protocol*' 2012)

Given the additional vulnerabilities of children and young people who are in care, on a Child Protection Plan or open to social care as a Child in Need, responding to 'missing episodes' involving these children and young people must be a priority for social care practitioners.

Please note that new ‘Statutory guidance on children who run away and go missing from home or care’ has been issued by DfE on January 17th 2014, with the following definitions:

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

Local guidance – including this document - will need to be reviewed and possibly amended to reflect the new national guidance. This review and revision will be led by the Safeguarding Children Boards for Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County and should include appropriate representation from Social Care.

i) Local Context.

Protocol.

Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board (NCSCB) and Nottinghamshire County Safeguarding Children Board introduced the '***Children Who Go Missing from Home, Care or Education Protocol (Inter-agency Practice Guidance)***' in May 2012.

Missing Children team.

This team sits within the 'Family Community Team' directorate and began operating in September 2012. The team consists of:

- Andrew High - Senior Practitioner
- Wendy Hall - Administrator (part-time)
- Kelly Cooper - Family Support Worker (from 1st October 2012)

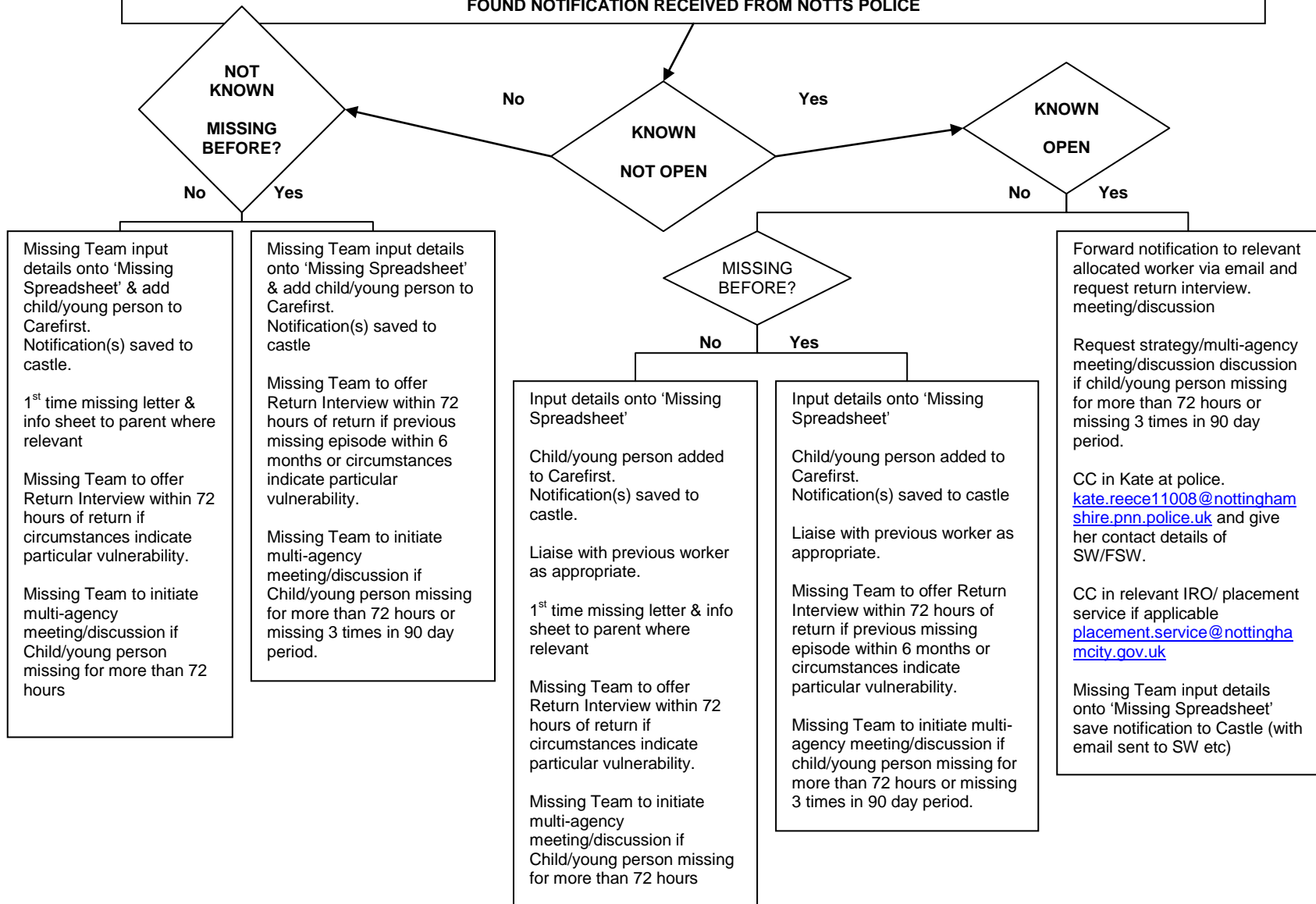
The team was established primarily to ensure that the local protocol '*Children Who Go Missing from Home, Care or Education*' is implemented. The team took over from SCIMT in terms of receiving and processing 'missing' and 'found' notifications from Notts Police and from the NSPCC 'Home and away' service in terms of responding to children and young people who do not have an allocated Children and Families worker.

The team receives all the notifications from Notts Police for when a child is reported as 'missing' or has been 'found' in Nottingham City. We record and – where required – take action on receipt of these notifications. If there is already an allocated worker, they are informed of the 'missing' episode and relevant follow-up action requested. If there is no allocated worker, return interviews/further work/ multi-agency meetings for relevant young people are undertaken by the 'missing' family support worker or senior practitioner. Where appropriate, we offer short-term contact with a young person and/or their family (similar to the response offered by the former NSPCC service): if longer term support is needed or there are immediate child protection concerns, other, relevant services will be contacted.

The team provides reports to Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board and contributes to building better shared intelligence about Nottingham children at risk from going missing. Andrew and Kelly continue to develop working links with all relevant teams across the city and provide a point of reference for responding to 'missing' episodes. Our primary contact with the police is the 'missing persons unit', we are in regular contact with social care duty and screening about young people and liaise regularly with schools (mainly secondary) across the city as well as a variety of other colleagues as necessary, for example, through the 'Concerns Network' hosted by NSPCC.

PROCESS FOR 'MISSING' & 'FOUND' NOTIFICATIONS FROM NOTTS POLICE

MISSING NOTIFICATION RECEIVED FROM NOTTS POLICE
CHECK CAREFIRST/ENTER ON 'MISSING SPREADSHEET'
 FOUND NOTIFICATION RECEIVED FROM NOTTS POLICE



Children reported as missing in Nottingham City: Social Care Flowchart

Notification received from Notts Police that a child/young person open to NCC Social Care has been reported as 'missing' and 'found'

Email sent by missing team to relevant colleagues notifying them of the missing episode.

Social Worker is responsible for:

- i) informing parents of 'missing episode' (unless circumstances dictate otherwise)
- ii) ensuring Return Interview/multi-agency meeting/strategy discussion is undertaken as required

Return Interview to be conducted within 72 hours of child/young persons return (see appended template).

Key aims of Return Interview are to:

- Raise the child/young persons awareness of the risks of their 'missing' behaviour
- Inform future work/plans for the child/young person
- Ascertain any information about people, places activity that pose a risk to this or other children/young people and share this appropriately

Return Interview Form completed and uploaded on CareFirst , notifying missing team by e.mail to wendy.hall@nottinghamcity.gov.uk giving date of interview

If, child/young person is missing on 3 or more occasions in a 90 day period or engaging in risky behaviour a multi agency meeting is required (see appended guidance)

IF, multi agency meeting is required, minutes of the meeting should be saved to Castle and notified by email to wendy.hall@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

Following multi agency meeting, the Child's Placement Action Plan or other Care Plan – and Risk Assessment - will be updated to include information on how practitioners should support the child/young person and ensure they are safeguarded

Flowchart for Nottingham CiC reported as missing from placements outside of Nottinghamshire (to follow).

Nottingham City CiC reported as missing to local police by external accommodation provider

- Accommodation provider to share information (by e.mail) with:
1. *The child's allocated Nottingham City Social Worker (this worker should also be contacted directly by telephone)*
 2. *Nottinghamshire Police at: kate.reece11008@nottinghamshire.pnn.police.uk*
 3. *Nottingham City Missing Children Team at: NottinghamCity.MissingChildrenTeam@nottinghamcity.gcsx.gov.uk*

Information about the child being subsequently 'found' by the provider with the same people and places.

Social Worker is responsible for:

- i) informing parents of 'missing episode' (unless circumstances dictate otherwise)
- ii) ensuring Return Interview/multi-agency meeting/strategy discussion is undertaken as required.

For children placed away from Nottingham, the following may be able to assist in seeing the child/young person for the purpose of a Return Interview:

- IRO
- Independent Advocate (pending new contract)
- (*Possibly* 'Missing Service' local to the provider.

NB such services may not be available or may require negotiation/payment.

**Refer to (previous)
Children reported as missing in Nottingham City: Social Care Flowchart**

The minimum information that will be required from the accommodation provider is:

1. *The incident number from your local Police relating to the 'missing' report*
2. *Date and time the child was reported as missing*
3. *Any significant information regarding the circumstances of the 'missing' episode (antecedents, other people, specific risks identified etc)*

The minimum required information about the child being 'found' is:

1. *The incident number from your local Police relating to the episode*
2. *Date and time the child was found*
3. *Where and how the child was found*
4. *Any significant information regarding the circumstances of the episode (other people involved, addresses or vehicles involved, activities, injuries etc)*
5. *Immediate response of the placement to the child's return.*

Compliance with this process will be monitored as part of the Nottingham City Council Placement Monitoring Process.

RETURN INTERVIEW FORM AND GUIDANCE

RETURN INTERVIEW – for Missing Children who runaway from home or care

MISSING PERSON NOTIFICATION (MISPER)

It is a requirement of NI 71 that a Return Interview takes place within 72 hours of the child/young person's return, if possible. The interview is to be recorded on the Return Interview form below.

The Guidelines below aim to assist you when conducting the discussion with the child. Engaging the child is very important because we need to discuss with them the risks they may face when they go missing from Home or Care.

GUIDELINES FOR COMPLETING THE RETURN INTERVIEW FORM

This form has been agreed and is in accordance with all the data and information needs required by NI 71. The return interview form will ensure that there is a much clearer picture of the child's needs and reflect the risks that the child may be exposed too.

It is important to have as much information as possible at an early stage and the initial Return Interview is a comprehensive assessment tool to ensure that all aspects and influences that impact on the child are recorded. There are trigger questions to ensure that this assessment is as holistic as possible in order that, should there be further missing episodes, a full picture can emerge over time. The child should be encouraged to freely express all the details of the missing episode and the reason for their running away. Open questions should be asked wherever possible.

It may be that the breadth of questions may not relate to every child and the knowledge and expertise of those carrying out the interview will determine what is pertinent to each child's particular experiences. Previous assessment information needs to be referred to in each subsequent return interview in order that a full and changing picture can emerge. It is important to reflect this in the summary, analysis and actions recommended by the interviewer.

Please ensure that you **tick the categories at the end of the interview form** so that data can be collated and analysed. This data is outcome focussed and will enable a local needs analysis to be undertaken.

Important Note:-

- when the form is complete please upload onto CASTLE
- please inform the Missing Children Team (wendy.hall@nottinghamcity.gov.uk) that form has been uploaded
- Missing Children Return Interview Audit will be updated
- **Compliance with this request will be audited on a monthly basis by the Missing Children Steering Group.**

Thank you for your co-operation with this request

CHILDREN MISSING FROM CARE AND HOME RETURN INTERVIEW

RECORD OF RETURN INTERVIEW

Child's Name:
DOB:
Address:
Ethnicity:
Disability (give details):
Gender:
Legal Status:
Child Looked After:
Type of accommodation out of area placement:
Responsible Authority:

Parent/Carer Name(s) and Contact Details including telephone numbers:-

Home address if different from above:-

Address child went missing from:

Times and dates of Missing Episode – If known

Went missing:	Date:	Time:
Returned:	Date:	Time:
Interview Conducted:	Date:	Time:

Number of previous missing episodes in last 90 days:

Parent/Carer refuses consent for interview – please give details and dates

Child/young person refuses consent for interview – please give details and dates

What led to the child being reported as missing?

Address or location/area found or returned from: (Description of address if exact details are not known)

Safe from Harm

Any identified risks within or outside home eg violence, gangs, sexual exploitation, substance misuse, criminal activity.

Any contact with any person who poses a risk to children, if so give name and details

Did anybody assault, abuse or threaten to harm the child whilst they were missing?

Is the child afraid of anybody? Has the child been bullied or racially abused?

Did the child/young person voice any issues regarding home/placement? If so provide details and dates.

What happened when they went missing? - Where did they stay?

Whom did they meet? Name and description of persons this child associated with whilst missing:

Learning, Achievement and Positive contributions

- **Include factual information eg which school do they attend, year group**
- **Possible issues eg attendance, behaviour, bullying, achievements, interests**
- **Issues with regard to any disability**

Economic/Environmental Factors

- **Explore family stressors and strengths: housing, employment**

Healthy

- **Issues may include under age sexual activity, binge drinking, substance misuse, chronic health conditions eg diabetes, emotional well being.**
- **How does child feel about her/himself?**
- **Self care/independence?**
- **Mental health issues?**

Observations of the child's physical condition on return

Was child clean/unkempt/hungry? Did the child have different clothes on when they returned?

Did they have different personal items on them ie cash/mobile phone etc

Observations of the child's emotional condition on return

How is the child now?

Is there anything that the child needs to support them that could prevent them going missing again? (Someone to talk to speak to parents/school etc.)

Current Support/Networks

- **Who lives in the household?**
- **Have they always lived with these family members? (Timeline/ecomap to follow if appropriate.)**
- **Does anyone else stay regularly?**
- **Any other family members/friends/adults who live close by or are important to the young person**

Parenting/Caring Capacity

- **Response to missing episode and risk**
- **Emotional warmth and development/stability and social development**
- **Family functions/wellbeing**
- **Basic Care, ensures safe and protected**
- **Guidance, Boundaries, Stimulation**
- **Anxiety Issues**
- **Domestic Violence, substance misuse, mental health**

What is the likelihood of this child going missing again?

Very Likely Likely Unlikely Unsure

'Signs of Safety scaling'

How safe do you feel the young person is on a scale of 0-10, where 0 means you feel really unsafe and 10 means you are as safe as you can possibly be. Please circle:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Summary, Analysis and Actions

Person completing return interview:

Signature:

Name: (please PRINT)

Role/Organisation:

Date:

Important Note:-

- when the form is complete please upload onto CASTLE
- please inform the Missing Children Team (wendy.hall@nottinghamcity.gov.uk) that form has been uploaded
- Missing Children Return Interview Audit will be updated
- **Compliance with this request will be audited on a monthly basis by the Missing Children Steering Group.**

Additional guidance re. missing children multi-agency meetings

Please note that we do not request a specific missing multi agency meeting, missing can be an agenda item at a meeting you already have arranged, however the missing discussion must be minuted with clear actions recorded. If you do not have a meeting already arranged you would require a multi agency meeting.

When should the meeting take place?

Best practice is for the meeting to be held within 10 working days.

Strategy discussions should be held at the point of 72hrs missing, with on going dialogue and a multi agency meeting reviewing actions from the strategy discussion taking place within a further 3-5 days still missing or found dependent on the level of risk.

Who should chair the meeting?

Prior to the meeting a discussion should take place with your Team Manager to establish the level of risk and an agreement should be made as to if the allocated worker or Team Manager will chair the meeting.

Please note CSE meetings will need to be chaired by an IRO.

Who should I invite?

All professionals where appropriate working with the child / young person should be invited to the meeting; this could involve a wide range of colleagues from:

- Police
- Children's Social Care / Independent Reviewing Officer / Family Resource Workers
- Targeted Support / Case Managers / Troubled Families
- School / Academies / Alternative Provision Providers / Elective Home Education
- Education Psychology
- Child Health / School Nurse / GP
- CAHMS
- Child / Young Person / Parent Carers

(please use professional judgement as to whether you feel they should attend certain agenda items or the full meeting)

- Residential Care Staff
- CAFCASS
- Equality and Achievement

What would the agenda look like?

- Introductions

Ascertain who is working with the young person, what their role is and what work they have already completed with the child / young person.

- Review of previous missing episodes

Why has the meeting been called? 3x missing within 90 days? 72hrs missing? engaging in risky behaviour? or a review of multiple missing episodes?

How many times has the child been reported missing? what times of day? are there visible patterns in the missing episodes? links to truancy?

- What actions are being taken prior to the child / young person being reported missing?

Are appropriate checks being made to locate the child / young person? i.e. contacting the young person via mobile, contacting family / friends, checking social media, searching the surrounding areas, visiting known hot spots etc
Is the child / young person being reported missing within timelines outlined in guidance? 24hrs missing from home, 6hrs missing from care. Are allocated workers being notified as well as the Police?

- Return Interviews

Have return interviews taken place? were they held within timescales? Have return interviews been refused? If so, what can we do different to engage the parent / carers / young person?

What has the child / young person informed us about why they went missing? where they went? with whom?

What reasons were recorded by professionals for the child / young person going missing i.e. are there issues at home? school? relationships? etc

- Sharing of Intelligence with the police and colleagues.

Have we established names / addresses that the child / young person may have visited / stayed whilst missing? Have checks been completed?

Are there other locations the child may have visited? clubs / bars / restaurants / hotels / stations

Are there known vehicles recorded? colour? model? registration? identifiable features? car stickers etc

- Causes for concern?

Has it been indicated that the child / young person may have been linked to adults who may pose a risk?

Has the child received gifts? (jewellery / clothes / phones / money) Alcohol / drug misuse? Engaged in sexual activity? Have they come to harm whilst missing? sleeping rough?

CSE concerns should be discussed with your Team Manager, with all information sent via secure e-mail to: seiu@nottinghamshire.pnn.police.co.uk

- Actions

How can we reduce missing episodes? what needs to change for the child / young person? which agency is in the best position to meet identified needs? who will be the lead professional? when will the plan be reviewed?

Actions should be clearly recorded, by whom and by when.

Minutes should be uploaded to Castle with a case note or e-mail alert sent to wendy.hall@nottinghamcity.gov.uk . A case note should also be completed confirming that the meeting has taken place.

72hr Missing Strategy Discussions

A strategy discussion is required between Social Care and Police when a child has been missing for 72hrs.

Please note that the strategy discussion is not necessarily a face to face meeting, this can be held as a telephone conversation but must be clearly recorded.

Prior to the strategy discussion taking place between Social Care and Police you will need to have had a discussion with your Team Manager.

The aim of the strategy discussion is to:

- ascertain the level of risk; is the behaviour out of character? has contact been made? have all checks been completed on hot spots, addresses etc do we have CSE concerns? has there been criminal involvement?
- share all information that may help to locate the child/young person i.e. names, addresses, phone numbers, car registrations of family members / friends / acquaintances
- thorough check of social network sites
- consider what action will be required once the child / young person has been found. Will they be returned home or to their care placement or will alternative accommodation need to be sought?
- consider if the Service Manager, Head of Service and Service Director need to be informed.

Responding to Unauthorised Absences from Nottingham City Childrens Homes: Background

Current Definition (from NCSCB Missing Protocol, May 2012)

Unauthorised Absence from Residential Care: Absent for a short period of time and after a thorough risk assessment and consideration of their Care Plan, the absence does not raise concern for their immediate safety or that of anyone else. Children who are 'unauthorised absence' should not be reported to the Police and must be the subject of a continuous risk assessment review process while they remain absent. If there is evidence of any of the circumstances detailed in 2.4 being present or the child has not returned or been located within **SIX** hours they should be re-categorised as missing, the steps detailed in

Chapter 3.2 undertaken and be reported to the Police. **NO CHILD MUST REMAIN UNREPORTED TO THE POLICE AFTER 24 HOURS.**

Please note that new 'Statutory guidance on children who run away and go missing from home or care' has been issued by DfE on January 17th 2014, with the following definitions:

- *Missing from care:* a looked after child who is not at their placement or the place they are expected to be (eg, school) and their whereabouts is not known.
- *Away from placement without authorisation:* a looked after child whose whereabouts is known but who is not at their placement or place they are expected to be and the carer has concerns or the incident has been notified to the local authority or the police.

Local guidance – including this document - will need to be reviewed and possibly amended to reflect the new national guidance. This review and revision will be led by the Safeguarding Children Boards for Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County and should include appropriate representation from Social Care.

Responding to Unauthorised Absences from Nottingham City Childrens Homes: Process

1. Staff become aware that child or young person not where they are supposed to be.
2. Consider circumstances & vulnerability of the child/young person.
3. Make efforts to contact child
 - a. Efforts successful – whereabouts established & safety confirmed: agree new time for return –considering the circumstances and vulnerability of the child/young person. If they do not return at this time, return to 1.
 - b. Efforts unsuccessful: consider circumstances and vulnerability of the child – commence '*Incident Record for Child in Care whose whereabouts are unknown*': GO TO 4 or 5...
4. Contact police immediately to report child as missing if whereabouts unknown & and/or the child is known or suspected to be at risk:, considering the circumstances and vulnerability of the child/young person
 - a. Log on '*Incident Record for Child in Care whose whereabouts are unknown*'.

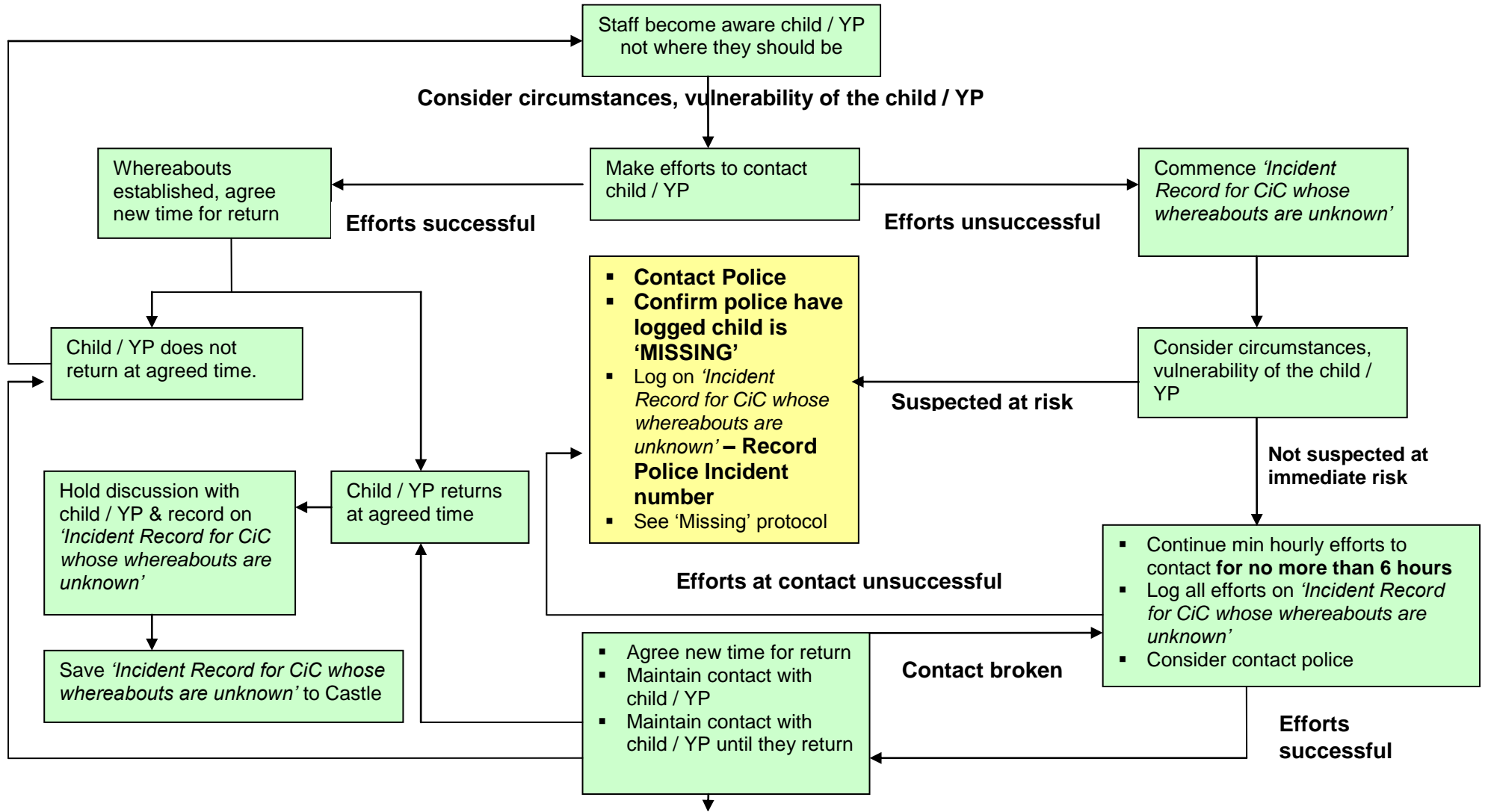
- b. Confirm police have logged child as 'missing'. CHILD IS MISSING (not unauthorised absence).
 - c. Record incident number from police on '*Incident Record for Child in Care whose whereabouts are unknown*'.
5. If child/young person not deemed to be at immediate risk considering the circumstances and vulnerability of the child/young person: continue efforts to contact young person & significant others on regular basis – minimum hourly.
 - a. Log all efforts on '*Incident Record for Child in Care whose whereabouts are unknown*':
 - b. *Consider contacting police to alert to child/young person being absent – needs further discussion/police input (ACPO & National guidance)*
6. Efforts at contact unsuccessful: go to 4. Report to police – *after no more than 6 hours (local judgement)*, or sooner having consideration for the circumstances & vulnerability of the child/young person.
7. Efforts successful – whereabouts established & safety confirmed:
 - a. Agree new time for return –considering the circumstances and vulnerability of the child/young person.
 - b. Maintain contact with the child/young person as appropriate having consideration for the circumstances & vulnerability of the child/young person until they return – go to 5:
 - c. Police should always be alerted to absence of child/young person if they have been absent for more than 24 hours – possibly sooner - even if whereabouts and safety established.
8. On return from unauthorised absence, hold discussion with child/young person & record on '*Incident Record for Child in Care whose whereabouts are unknown*'. (Home staff to use their judgement on use of RI format/prompts/questions).
9. Save '*Incident Record for Child in Care whose whereabouts are unknown*' to castle.

10. A strategy meeting should be called by the young persons' social worker if a young person has 10 unauthorised absence episodes in any 4 week period.

A strategy meeting should be called after fewer such episodes if considered necessary or appropriate.

The strategy meeting can be chaired by a Team Manager.

Flowchart: Unauthorised Absences



Police should always be alerted to absence of child/YP if absent for more than 24 hours – possibly sooner – even if whereabouts & safety established

INCIDENT RECORD FOR CHILD IN CARE WHOSE WHEREABOUTS ARE UNKNOWN

To be used in accordance with **Joint Protocol for Children Missing from Care April May 2012** – SUBJECT TO REVIEW
 Nottinghamshire Police, Nottinghamshire Children's Social Care Department, Nottingham City Children's Services Department)

Residential Home:		Child's Name:		Carefirst ID:	
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Unauthorised Absence = DO NOT report to Police – unless decision is taken to alert them to absence/absent for more than 24 hours
Missing = Report to Police **within 6 HOURS** of whereabouts becoming unknown
Absconder = Report to Police **IMMEDIATELY**

Date	Time of Entry	Circumstances of whereabouts becoming unknown	Identified Risk (H/M/L)	Category based on risk (Unauthorised Absence, Missing, Absconder)	Actions Taken Progression Notes Discussion on return from unauthorised absence notes.	Name (PRINT) & Signature	Ongoing
							<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing?