INFORMATION FOR REPORTING CHILDREN MISSING

Children and young people who go missing are at significant risk of harm. They face risks not only while away from home or care but also from problems that contributed to them going missing, including child sexual exploitation (CSE), child criminal exploitation (CCE),mental health issues and problems at school or home.

Missing procedures

When children are reported missing to the police, the person reporting will be asked a number of questions. It is important the caller can provide as much detail as possible about the child, the circumstances around the child going missing and what has been done to search and locate the child.

The police missing report is then shared with Children’s Services via our MASH team. All children who are reported missing are then offered a Return Home Interview unless it is deemed unnecessary (the child was not actually missing e.g. was at other parent’s house).

The RHI is an opportunity to have a conversation with the child about the missing episode. It should help identify the why’s, where’s, who’s and what’s and how’s! Why did the YP go missing, where did they go, who were they with, what happened and how can we help support them. The RHI also allows relevant conversations around CSE, CCE, staying safe, healthy relationships

Safecall:

Safecall is a service ran by the charity Missing People. It is a free, confidential service for children and young people who may be involved in gangs or county lines and have frequent missing episodes. This is a child-led service that can draw up safety plans to minimise further exploitation. It allows children a safe space to talk in confidence. It also offers support to parents and carers.

Some facts and data collated by Children’s Society from Return home Interviews (RHI’s

* One in seven (14%) children were either currently victims of sexual exploitation or had been in the past. More than two in five (43%) children shared information relating to one or more of five indicators that might be considered a ‘red flag’ for CSE.7
* One in twelve (8%) children were either a current or past victim of criminal or another form of child exploitation
* One in five (21%) children shared information which suggested they had depression or another mental health issue:
* Around one in eight (13%) presented at risk of self-harm.
* 4% disclosed information suggesting they were at risk of suicide.

* Over half (51%) had issues with truancy, poor school attendance or exclusion from school.
* Two in five (40%) shared information relating to substance misuse and three in ten (30%) about alcohol misuse.
* More than two in five (42%) were identified as having low self-esteem or poor self-confidence.
* Close to two in five (39%) of all children who went missing from the research area went missing from care.