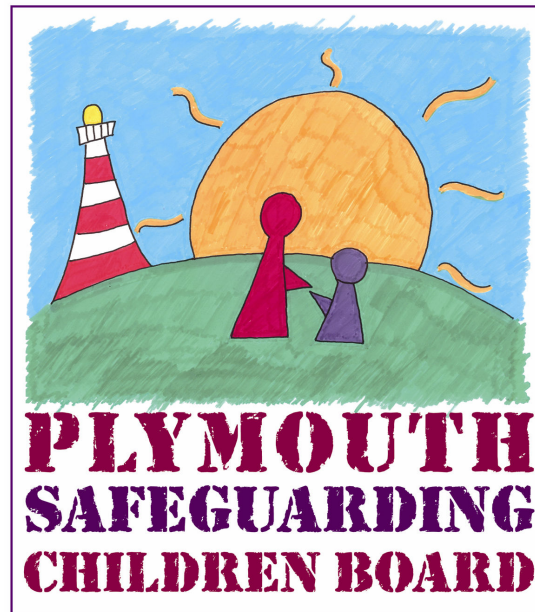


Plymouth Safeguarding Children Board



Missing Children and Young People:

Multi Agency Policy and Procedures



26th June 2008

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Part 1

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This joint protocol refers to situations when children and young people go missing. This document defines the roles and responsibilities of the following agencies and organisations:
- Police
 - Social Care staff and carers
 - Health
 - Education
 - Connexions
 - Voluntary and Independent Sector
- 1.2 All relevant agencies, organisations and carers should use their professional judgement to take any action they feel is necessary to protect the safety of the child, based on an assessment of risk.
- 1.3 Children who go missing may place themselves at risk. The reasons for their absence cannot be viewed in isolation from their home circumstances, their life experience and their experiences of care. Every 'missing' episode should receive the full attention of professionals who must **collaborate** together to ensure that a consistent and coherent response is given.
- 1.4 If child protection issues arise as a result of children going missing it is important that agencies work together within the agreed child protection and confidentiality procedures.
- 1.5 This document will be reviewed on an annual basis by lead officers from Devon and Cornwall Police, Plymouth City Council's Children's Services and Housing Departments, Plymouth Teaching Primary Care Trust, Connexions and the Voluntary Sector.

2. Legal Context

Guidance: Children Missing from Care and from Home 2002 – Department of Health

http://www.dh.gov.uk/PublicationsAndStatistics/LettersAndCirculars/LocalAuthorityCirculars/AllLocalAuthorityCirculars/LocalAuthorityCircularsArticle/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4004872&chk=AaEVVh

What to do if you're worried a child is being abused: Children's Services Guidance 2003 – Department of Health

http://www.dh.gov.uk/PublicationsAndStatistics/LettersAndCirculars/LocalAuthorityCirculars/AllLocalAuthorityCirculars/LocalAuthorityCircularsArticle/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4003423&chk=GWx3cM

Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons 2005 – Association of Chief Police Officers

<http://www.missingpersons.police.uk/docs/MissingPersonsInteractive.pdf>

Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities in England to identify children not receiving education 2007 – Department of Education and Skills.

<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources/IG00202/>

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1998/19980037.htm>

Children Act 1989

http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1989/Ukpga_19890041_en_1.htm

Young Runaways – Report by the social exclusion unit (November 2002)

<http://www.bristol-cyps.org.uk/socialcare/procedures/childprotection/pdf/young-runaways-report.pdf>

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

<http://inclusion.uwe.ac.uk/csie/unrights.htm>

Human Rights Act

<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts1998/19980042.htm>

3. Definitions

3.1 The Association of Chief Police Officers definition of a **missing person** is:

'anyone whose whereabouts is unknown whatever the circumstances of disappearance. They will be considered missing until located and their well-being or otherwise established.'

3.2 There will be circumstances where a person is 'missing' but police involvement may not be required, e.g., tracing a long lost relative. Appropriate action may be a referral to other relevant agencies that may provide assistance.¹

3.3 Classifications of Missing Children and Young People

Children/young people who are looked after fall broadly into three different categories when they go missing. Professionals should be careful not to apply the definitions too categorically: children/young people can and will change from one category to the other as their situation is reviewed and monitored during the period they are missing.

There are broadly three categories that are relevant:-

- **Unauthorised absence**
- **Absconded**
- **Missing**

3.3.1 Unauthorised Absence

Any unauthorised absence that extends beyond six hours will require the child or young person to be reported as a missing person, however other factors may mean that a decision is taken to report the child/young person as missing prior to this time.

Sometimes children stay out longer than agreed, either on purpose or accidentally, and may be testing boundaries. This kind of boundary testing is within the range of normal teenage behaviour and not necessarily considered a risk.

3.3.2 Absconded

Children and young people who have run away or gone missing who are subject to legal orders such as;

- Secure Orders
- Remand to Local Authority accommodation

3.3.3 Missing

Where concern is raised about the child or young person's absence and where;

- Their location is unknown

¹ Guidance on The Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons Association of Chief Police Officers 2005

- The reason for their absence is unknown
- They are vulnerable
- Other risk factors are present

The term 'missing' is also used to describe a child or young person who has run away. Therefore the terms 'missing' and 'run away' or 'go missing' are used interchangeably. This is because key documents use a variety of words to describe these children.

The definition of Children Missing Education in this document refers to all children and young people of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll, nor being educated otherwise (e.g. privately or in alternative provision) and who have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time (usually agreed as four weeks or more).

4. Information Sharing and Notification

- 4.1 Sharing information between agencies will be governed by existing information sharing protocols. It is essential that all agencies share information in order to ensure the immediate safety, tracing, return and follow-on support to all relevant children and young people. This applies to all statutory, voluntary and independent agencies providing services concerned with the care and protection of children and young people.
- 4.2 The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 section 115 requires all relevant agencies to share information in order to prevent criminal activity.

5. Risk Assessments: summary

- 5.1 In assessing the significance of a child's absence, the above definitions and any guidance already agreed in the child's care planning, should be taken into consideration including:
- The age of the child.
 - The legal status of the child.
 - Previous behaviour and history.
 - The emotional needs of the child, eg whether there has been any variation in their mood or whether they have expressed any intention to harm themselves or others.
 - Behaviour of the child as influenced by peer groups or others.
 - Mental and physical health needs.
 - Whether the child or young person has been the victim or perpetrator of violent, homophobic and/or racist incidents prior to disappearance.
 - Whether the child or young person been subjected to bullying.
 - Is the child or young person suspected to be a subject to crime in progress, eg abduction?
 - Whether the child is perceived as running to/running from someone/something.
 - The risk of offending.
 - The risk that the child may be targeted for sexual exploitation.

5.2 Staff in all organisations concerned should avoid dismissing the potential significance of repeated running away. Often such children are immediately labelled as the problem and insufficient consideration is given to why they persistently abscond. Persistent running needs to be explored, particularly at the time of post return interviews.

5.3 A range of “push” and “pull” factors may be reasons for being absent:

- Push factors – may include conflict with parents/carers, feeling powerless, bullying, being unhappy in care, physical or sexual abuse.
- Pull factors – may include wanting to be with family or friends, peer pressure, attractions of street life, attractions of people who may present a risk and exploit the child.

Part 2

Roles and Responsibilities of Key Agents

The roles and responsibilities of key agents will be set out in the next seven sections and include:

- Police
- Social Care
- Health
- Children missing from education
- Housing
- Voluntary and independent agencies
- Connexions

6. Police

- 6.1 Under the Children Act 1989, where there is reasonable cause to believe that the child could suffer significant harm, the police can take the child into police protection.
- 6.2 There will be occasions when a child is found in a location that may be considered unsuitable, but where there would not be legal grounds for taking them into police protection. In such cases, police, parents and Children's Social Care will need to liaise to discuss what steps may be necessary in order to safeguard the child's welfare.
- 6.3 The police will act on missing persons' reports in line with police procedures and any locally agreed procedures/protocols.
- 6.4 When the police receive a missing person's report they will gather the information needed to make a risk assessment, decide whether an officer will attend in person if contact was made by telephone, and pass details to the initial supervising officer.
- 6.5 The police officer undertaking the investigation will complete a form 121A for missing children and young people who are reported to the police. This notification is faxed or electronically transmitted (where the new data arrangements operate) to the Police Child Protection Unit (PCPU). If there are continuing child protection concerns, the child protection team need to consider calling a strategy meeting. The police may need to attend multi-agency strategy meetings with partner agencies and consider media notification and contacting the National Missing Persons' Help line.
- 6.6 When a child or young person is found and is not already subject to an order, the police may exercise their power of protection as necessary if they think the child or young person would be likely to suffer from harm if they went home. The police can take the child to a "place of safety" for up to 72 hours under the police powers of protection. During this time the Children's Social Care department will undertake an initial assessment. The police and children's services will co-operate fully during this time.

- 6.7 On the child or young person's return the police will carry out a welfare check (usually within 24 hours). At this time 'sign-posting' information will be given to child or young person about the availability of independent services such as the young Runaways Project.

7. Social Care

This document should be read and applied in conjunction with the protocol Missing Children and Young People: Multi Agency Management, Recording, Reporting and Investigation ” (March 2007).

This document covers:

- Children in Need
- Children in Care

7.1 Children in Need (not in care)

7.1.1 The following procedures apply when Children's Services become aware that a missing child or young person is:

- On the Child Protection Register
- Subject to a Section 47 enquiry or child protection enquiry
- Subject to an initial/core assessment where there are growing concerns or where professionals with a responsibility for the child's welfare agree that there are concerns for their safety and well being if they are not located.

7.1.2 In these circumstances children's social care must inform:

- The relevant police station and Police Child Protection Unit
- The custodian of the Child Protection Register, if the child is on the Register
- Designated nurse if the child or young person is on the child protection Register
- All local agencies who may know the child or young person to obtain any information that may help the police officer responsible for locating the missing person to trace the child or young person
- Education Welfare Services in order to notify colleagues in other areas
- All those with parental responsibility as appropriate and with consideration to
- Notifying extended family members
- Legal services if a child or young person is subject to court proceedings.

7.1.3 All contacts must be confirmed in writing and recorded within the Electronic Social Care Record (ICS).

7.1.4 If, following the above procedures, the child has not been traced, a strategy meeting should be held within five working days. Members of the meeting will need to consider:

- Whether to circulate the child or young person's details to other local authorities

and other agencies in the area in which the child or young person is thought to have gone

- Notifying national authorities and agencies including Social Security, the Benefits Agency and Child Benefit Agency
- Appropriate legal interventions if there is any suspicion that the child may be removed from UK jurisdiction.

7.1.5 If a child or young person is on the Child Protection Register, their Social Worker, accountable Team Manager and custodian of the Child Protection Register must decide and record whether to hold a Review Child Protection Conference.

7.1.6 If a child on the child protection register is not found within 20 working days a Review Child Protection Conference must be brought forward to consider any additional action.

7.1.7 When the child is located, if missing for more than 24 hours, a strategy discussion between the agencies involved should take place within the same working day to consider:

- Immediate safety issues
- Whether to start a S.47 enquiry
- Who needs to be informed of the child's return (both locally and nationally).

7.1.8 Refer to Child Protection Procedures for information on strategy discussions and meetings.

7.1.9 Incidents of specific concern

A strategy meeting/discussion should be considered if the running away/going missing of a child or young person is causing specific concern, for example by frequent repetition or indication of particular risk such as contact with sex offenders, or the possibility that the child or young person may be engaging in prostitution

7.1.10 Making a referral to the police

When reporting to the police, the person taking the report will need the following information:

- A description of the child and their clothing.
- Age and ethnicity.
- Details of when the child was last seen and with whom.
- A recent photograph (if available).
- Family addresses.
- Known associates and addresses frequented.
- Any previous history of absconding / absenteeism and circumstances of where found.
- The circumstances under which the child is absent.
- Any factors which increase the risk to the child.
- Any Risk Assessment.

7.1.11 The police will use the above information to complete the national reporting form

regarding missing persons (See Table 1 at the end of this section).

7.1.12 Children Missing from Other Areas

The accountable manager must ensure that all duty systems keep and refer to the notifications of children and young people who are missing from other local authorities. These appear on the client database, are maintained by the custodian of the Register.

7.1.13 These details may be removed if after two years there is no communication from the authority where the child went missing.

7.1.14 Returning the Child or Young Person

Where children and young people are located outside of the 'home' authority and are unlikely to return to their previous address, the 'receiving' authority must be involved in the strategy discussion and the transfer of the case must be discussed.

7.1.15 The police have primary responsibility for tracing vulnerable children/young people who go missing.

7.2 Children in Care

7.2.1 Children/young people who are looked after in Local Authority accommodation are the responsibility of us all.

7.2.2 The term 'in care' has been adopted to describe a child who is 'looked after', as it has been found that people prefer and understand this term, (DfES Green Paper – Care Matters 2006)

7.2.3 "Relevant" young people are young people who have left care, but who are owed duties under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. These young people are provided with suitable accommodation as they make transition to independence. This policy will be applied where their absence from this accommodation gives cause for concern.

7.2.4 Children/young people go missing for a variety of reasons. The representatives of different agencies must ensure that the response given by them is just as positive as that of a good parent. They must be found as quickly as possible, returned to a safe and appropriate place, and have the opportunity to say what made them go missing. Workers must listen to these reasons with respect, act accordingly and then assist the child/young person from feeling they need to go missing again.

7.3 Principles

7.3.1 When children/young people go missing from local authority care their welfare and protection is paramount

7.3.2 As a corporate parent, the Local Authority has a duty to care for the well-being and safety of the child/young person. This involves ensuring the child is located and either returned or placed in a safe environment.

- 7.3.3 Child Protection Procedures will be observed in respect of children/young people under 18 about whom there are concerns that they are involved in prostitution. (In line with Government guidance under Section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act)
- 7.3.4 The police will be notified of children/young people missing from Local Authority care in clearly defined circumstances based on professional judgement and following a risk assessment that properly balances the welfare of the child/young person against the deployment of services.
- 7.3.5 The police will promptly initiate their missing people procedures on all appropriate reports of children/young people missing from Local Authority care.
- 7.3.6 Every child/young person, who goes missing from Local Authority care will, when found, be informed of the opportunity to have an interview with an independent person in order to establish his or her reasons for going missing.
- 7.3.7 Depending on individual circumstances the independent person may be identified from the young Runaways Project.
- 7.3.8 All relevant steps must then be taken to avoid them going missing again.

7.4 Information sharing

- 7.4.1 The sharing of information between the agencies in respect of looked after children/young people who go missing is essential. This will assist in the most appropriate response to the child/young person during the time they are missing, after they return and at any point they are at risk of going missing again.

7.5 Planning

- 7.5.1 Planning ahead for the possibility of a child/young person going missing is essential, and should form part of the placement plan for the child or young person. Early strategies and proactive support from workers/carers should be in place to encourage children/young people not to go missing.
- 7.5.2 At the time the child/young person is placed there should be consideration of the likelihood of them going missing and provisional plans made for it becoming a reality. An identified course of action should, in most cases, be clearly laid out in the Placement/Care Plan; this should consider the degree of risk if they do; the parents' views; and the views of the child/young person themselves.
- 7.5.3 Both foster carers and residential Social Workers should be alert to the potential triggers and signals that a child/young person is considering going missing. They should be proactive at this stage and talk to the child/young person to discover what is wrong and put particular arrangements in place to encourage them to stay at the placement. Workers/carers should never be afraid to assert their authority in a nurturing and caring capacity in order to make the child/young person believe that they are wanted and they will be supported if they stay.

7.5.4 A pre-placement risk assessment must be completed in all cases. This will be recorded in the Placement Information Record, a copy of which must be given to the placement provider at the start of any placement, or within 72 hours if the placement was made in an emergency.

7.5.5 The pre-placement risk assessment will consider the following factors:

- The likelihood of the child going missing.
- The likelihood of the child/ young person being harboured.
- Any previous history of unauthorised absence or missing episodes.
- The degree of risk / harm of the child/young person going missing.
- The level of supervision/support offered to the child/young person.
- The parents' advice on what action they feel should be taken if the child/young person goes missing.
- Key information;
 - Up to date photograph.
 - Medical needs.
 - Mental health.
 - Victim or perpetrator of abuse/offences.
 - Previous incidents where young person suffered or was exposed to harm.
 - Places of accommodation previously sought.
 - Issues of identity, faith, race or cultural background or sexual orientation or gender.

7.5.6 This list is not exhaustive and workers should consider other relevant factors.

Where considered appropriate the child/young person should be given information about the risks of running away and the actions that will be taken.

7.6 Responses to Missing Children/Young People

7.6.1 Children and young people who have absconded from Local Authority Care

Children and young people who are subject to court ordered arrangements, who abscond must be reported to the police as they will then be in breach of these arrangements and may be subject to arrest and detention.

ACTIONS

7.6.2 The foster carer/care provider to inform Children's Social Care that a child has absconded from accommodation.

7.6.3 The foster carer completes an updated risk assessment in conjunction with the child's Social Worker or Out of Hours worker.

7.6.4 Social Worker (or out of hours worker) to inform the Police by contacting the operations room/enquiry centre on 08705 777444 and ask for Communications, providing information from the placement information record and up dated risk assessment (Refer risk assessment tool Table 1). They should also inform the Youth Offending Service if the young person was subject to remand or other conditions of residence imposed by

the Courts.

7.6.5 There should be ongoing communication between the workers of the various agencies to ensure that the young person is located and returned, or other arrangements are put in place for their accommodation if the place where they were accommodated is the cause of their absconding.

7.6.6 **Unauthorised Absence**

Any unauthorised absence that extends beyond six hours will require the child or young person to be reported as a missing person, however other factors may mean that a decision is taken to report the child/young person as missing prior to this time.

7.6.7 Sometimes children stay out longer than agreed, either on purpose or accidentally, and may be testing boundaries. This kind of boundary testing is within the range of normal teenage behaviour and not necessarily considered a risk.

ACTIONS

7.6.8 Foster carer/care providers will need to consider the following factors as part of the assessment of risk:

- Make a judgement as to whether the child/young person is absent from school without permission and likely to return at the end of the school day or if they have actually gone missing and there are other concerns about their safety.
- Establish with other colleagues/adult members of the household that they are in fact missing without permission.
- Make enquiries to try and find out where the child/young person may have gone. This will probably be done by either a physical search or by phone. Family and friends should be included in this search and after careful consideration it may be necessary to speak with other children/young people in the household.
- Take steps for them to return if their whereabouts are known. This action must never compromise the care of other children/young people or endanger the safety of anyone trying to get them back.
- Consider the previously agreed Care/Placement Plan and risk assessment about what should happen if they go missing.
- Review the current circumstances and decide if the course of action laid out in the care/placement plan is still appropriate.
- Have discussions with their line manager (foster carers can seek advice from the responsible social worker or the out of hours team) about what action to take.

7.6.9 After these steps have been taken; the foster carer will complete the Risk Assessment Tool (Table 1).

7.6.10 As part of an ongoing process the carer can and should at any time consider that that the child is now missing.

7.6.11 The carer should inform the Social Worker (out of hours worker) who will inform the police by contacting the police force operations room/enquiry centre on 08705 777444 and ask for communications, providing information from the placement information record and up dated risk assessment. (Refer to Risk Assessment Tool Table 1).

7.6.12 There should be ongoing communication between the workers of the various agencies to ensure that the young person is located and returned, or other arrangements are put in place for their accommodation.

7.6.13 Missing children

If a child has been considered to be absent without authorisation for more than six hours they will be notified to the Police as a missing child.

7.6.14 If a pre-placement risk assessment identifies that any absence by the child from the placement should be considered to be a missing episode then the police must be notified.

7.6.15 If there is a concern that the child has been abducted the police must be notified.

7.6.16 In some circumstances the foster carer may quickly assess that the child is missing as opposed to being absent without authorisation.

7.6.17 The foster carer will complete the Risk Assessment Tool (Table 1) and inform the child's Social Worker (or out of hours worker) who will notify the police by contacting the police force operations room/enquiry centre on 08705 777444 and ask for Communications, providing information from the placement information record and up dated risk assessment.

7.6.18 When making a referral to the police it is important they are informed of what actions have already been undertaken by the carer/Social Worker. This could include; people they may have already contacted and the response, any physical actions taken, i.e. 'drive rounds' or calls on known addresses, as this may prevent duplication of actions taken.

7.6.19 At the same time as notifying the police it is expected that the social worker or out of hours worker will inform the child's parents or those with parental responsibility, if the child is not subject to a Care Order. If the child is subject to a Care Order, consideration must be given to whether or not the child's parent(s) should be informed unless it is determined that by doing so they will jeopardise the safe return of the child.

7.6.20 There should be ongoing communication between the workers of the various agencies to ensure that the young person is located and returned, or other arrangements are put in place for their accommodation.

7.6.21 Risk Assessment

In assessing the risk to the child/young person the risk assessment checklist (Table 1) provides a framework for determining the risks to the child or young person.

7.6.22 These factors must be considered both in their own right and how they interact with each other, as this will lead to a cumulative evaluation of potential risk(s).

7.6.23 After collecting and analysing the information gathered about these factors the worker/carer should be able to describe the nature of the possible harm; its likelihood of

occurring and in what circumstances and then come to a defined level of risk broadly separated into high, medium and low risk. This informed judgement should be clearly conveyed to the police when the missing person's report is made.

7.6.24 It is essential that the categorisation of risk does not remain static while the child/young person is absent. It must be subject to regular and continuous review,

7.6.25 Within this continuous process the risk assessment/management becomes a shared responsibility between the Police, parent/carers, Children's Social Care and any other relevant agency or individual.

7.6.26 **Reporting Arrangements**

The initial contact with the police (as set out above) will be confirmed in writing and sent by fax within thirty minutes of the telephone call to the police that reported the child/young person as missing.

7.6.27 Workers/carers should also be prepared to produce a written report and give statements of evidence whenever required.

7.6.28 Any report to the police about a missing child/young person will be subject to a police operational log number and the person making the call must record this number as a record for all future contact with the police.

7.6.29 Upon receipt of an appropriate report the police will carry out an investigation in accordance with their own internal force procedure.

7.6.30 Parents/guardians with parental responsibility must be notified at the time the report is made to the police unless it is determined that by doing so they will jeopardise the safe return of the child. If the child is subject to a Care Order, consideration must be given to whether or not the child's parent(s) should be informed unless it is determined that by doing so they will jeopardise the safe return of the child.

7.6.31 Consideration should also be given to other individuals/agencies who need to be told that the child/young person has gone missing (e.g. Social Worker, Out of Hours, YOS, Drugs Service, School etc). They may have important information, which can help in locating the child/young person and facilitating their safe return.

7.6.32 **Children Missing for more than 24 hours**

The Permanency and Placement Service Manager and the relevant Service Manager must be told about any child/young person who is missing for longer than 24 hours, by the responsible social worker². Looked After Children (LAC) Service Manager* will then take the lead role in issues concerning the missing child or young person. In the LAC Service Manager's absence the Assistant Director of Children's Services must be contacted and take the lead.

7.6.33 For Young people in care over the age of 16 the Service Manager for the Leaving Care

² The 24 hours begins at the point the child/young person is first noted as missing from care and **not** at the point of any official report being made.

Service will be the relevant manager.

- 7.6.34 If a child/young person is missing for more than 3 days (or sooner if the risk assessment warrants) then the Head of Service and Director must be notified by the LAC Service Manager.
- 7.6.35 A joint meeting with all the key professionals but especially the police will be called if the child/young person is missing for 5 days.
- 7.6.36 Police Child Protection Officers must be invited and consideration should be given to them chairing this meeting.
- 7.6.37 It is the responsibility of the Social Worker and relevant Team Manager to initiate the meeting.
- 7.6.38 This meeting will determine the required course of action and include considerations about using the media³; the police National Missing Person's Bureau and other intelligence gathering units.
- 7.6.39 A lead worker will be identified who will be responsible for overseeing the time and events while the child/young person is missing.
- 7.6.40 If it is decided to use the media, it is the police's responsibility to advise the Local Authority via the responsible worker and the City Council press office as to how this will happen. The Local Authority will assist the police with the content of any media publication. Any decision to publish information must always be made in consultation and with the parents so their views can be sought and so that they are given notification of the intentions of the Police and Social Care Services. Workers must be alert to issues such as parental collusion with the child or young persons behaviour.
- 7.6.41 Whenever a child/young person is missing for 14 days a strategy meeting must be held as per the multi-disciplinary child protection handbook.
- 7.6.42 The Director for Children's Services and Assistant Director, Children's Social Care will formally review all cases where the child/young person has been missing for more than 6 weeks.
- 7.6.43 Where a child/young person is missing, their case must always remain open and should be formally reviewed at 3 monthly intervals by the Service Manager. When a young person becomes 18 the information about them will be relayed to Community Services, and for those young people owed duties under the Children (Leaving Care) Act, the Leaving Care Service will keep the case open until the young person becomes 21. The Service Manager will formally review the case at 3 monthly intervals.

7.7 Recording

³ For children/young people who are accommodated under Section 20 Children Act 1989 the parents will have to give permission for the police to do this, for those on care orders it is a joint decision between the parent and the local authority. If there is conflict then the services manager will make the final decision.

- 7.7.1 A full and careful record about children/young people who go missing must be made by all agencies in accordance with their respective recording systems.
- 7.7.2 The time the child/young person went missing and returned should be noted and included in the chronology (alongside whether they returned of their own accord or if someone else brought them back).

7.8 Planning for the Return

- 7.8.1 All children/young people must be treated sensitively and positively when they are located. All workers/carers must make every effort to ensure that the child/young person returns in a welcoming, nurturing and positive manner and in a way that will promote a higher likelihood that the child will not go missing again.
- 7.8.2 All interventions should aim to understand why the child/young person went missing and the Care Plan should be amended accordingly.
- 7.8.3 There will be situations when the police have to formally interview the child/young person before they return to Local Authority accommodation. The information ascertained from this interview will be shared with the workers/carers as appropriate and also related to the responsible social worker for relevant action.

7.9 The Return

- 7.9.1 It is usually the responsibility of Children's Social Care worker to make adequate arrangements to ensure the child/young persons safely returns to local authority accommodation.
- 7.9.2 If there are any identified difficulties with their return or concern about public order then the police will assist.
- 7.9.3 Where the child/young person is subject to a criminal order and has been arrested, the police must ensure that the child/young person is safely accommodated and this will be done in conjunction the appropriate adult at the police station.⁴
- 7.9.4 When a child/young person is returned either voluntarily or independently of the police, the worker/carer should telephone the police to say that they have arrived back. The police will then make a return phone call to satisfy themselves that the source of the call is genuine.
- 7.9.5 All the other relevant people and agencies (i.e. those informed that they were missing) must be told that the child/young person has returned without delay.

⁴ It is important to note that where the child/young person is in breach of bail they will be detained by the police until the next available court and the worker/carer will need to liaise with the YOT court/office duty workers regarding their return. It is always the responsibility of Social and Housing Service Workers to arrange for the child/young person to be accompanied during the court hearing and to arrange for them to be transported from the court to their placement. The YOT will assist with this process where possible.

- 7.9.6 After the child/young person returns, they must be informed that they will have the opportunity to speak to an independent person about what has happened while they have been away.
- 7.9.7 Episodes of the child being missing from placement will form part of the discussions at the next statutory review for the child/young person.
- 7.9.8 On return the child/young person's medical condition must always be initially assessed and appropriate medical attention or advice arranged immediately.
- 7.9.9 All child protection concerns should be progressed in the usual way. If the child/young person has been subjected to any form of abuse from any person either before, during or immediately after they have gone missing then workers/carers must follow the steps laid out in the Multi-disciplinary Child Protection Handbook.
- 7.9.10 All serious issues relating to the fostering placement must be reported to the Placements and Permanency Service Manager.

7.10 Children/Young People placed with Independent Providers

- 7.10.1 All serious issues relating to children's homes must be reported to Ofsted without delay. It is the responsibility of any individual regardless of the agency that has a concern to make this report and children/young people may wish to use the complaints contact system in order to raise their concerns.
- 7.10.2 Independent organisations should be given a copy of this document and it is expected that adherence will be part of any placement contract/accreditation of other organisations.
- 7.10.3 Those organisations are welcome to share this document with their own local constabulary in order to come to a view as to how the expectations within this document relate to their own local arrangements.
- 7.10.4 Devon and Cornwall police should always be notified about a child/young person placed outside the county going missing since there is a significant likelihood that they will try to return to their home area.
- 7.10.5 Where a child/young person goes missing whilst away from their home area the worker/carer should take the steps described above.
- 7.10.6 When they are sure the child/young person should be considered to be missing they must then notify the police in that area immediately.
- 7.10.7 The senior worker at the unit; responsible Social Worker or Out of Hours Team must also be contacted and told the facts about how the child/young person went missing. They must be given the phone number of the police in the area where the child/young person went missing.
- 7.10.8 The person receiving the call in the home area must notify local police about the child/young person who has gone missing and give them the number of the police in the

area where the child/young person went missing.

- 7.10.9 Other notifications must be made (as described above) by the person receiving the call in the home area.
- 7.10.10 Ongoing communication between agencies and individuals must be maintained until the child/young person is located.
- 7.10.11 When the child/young person is returned the above procedures apply.

Table 1 – Risk Assessment Checklist

This checklist is drawn from the checklist used by the police when determining the level of response that is required for each missing person.

When completing this form, if the answer to any of the questions is yes, the initial risk identification may be HIGH and advice of the child's social worker or out of hours worker must be sought to determine if an immediate referral to the police is required..

FACTOR	YES	NO
1. Is there any information that the person is likely to cause self-harm or attempt suicide?		
2. Is the person suspected to be subject of a crime in progress, e.g. abduction?		
3. Is she/he vulnerable due to age, infirmity or any other factor?		
4. Are there inclement weather conditions that would seriously increase risk		
5. Does the missing person need essential medication or treatment not readily available to them?		
6. Does the missing person have any physical illness, disability or mental health problems?		
7. Do you believe that the person may not have the ability to interact safely with others or in an unknown environment?		
8. Has the person been involved in a violent, homophobic and/or racist incident or confrontation immediately prior to disappearance?		
9. Has the person been the subject of bullying?		
10. Previously disappeared AND suffered or was exposed to harm?		
11. Is the behaviour out of character and likely to be an indicator of their being exposed to harm, e.g. drugs and alcohol		

Taken from: Guidance on: the management, recording and investigation of missing persons 2005. Association of Chief Police Officers

Plymouth Teaching Primary Care Trust

**Alert of Missing Families, Children and
Young People Where There Are Concerns
for Their Welfare Protocol**

Version No 1:3

NOTICE TO STAFF USING A PAPER COPY OF THIS GUIDANCE

The Policies and Procedures page of Healthnet holds the most recent and approved version of this guidance. Staff must ensure they are using the most recent guidance.

READER INFORMATION

Type of formal paper	Protocol
Category and Ratification Process	Corporate Clinical Guidance ratified by the Clinical and corporate Service Governance Group
Title	Alert of Missing Families, Children and Young People Where There Are Concerns for Their Welfare Protocol
Document Purpose and Description	Identify Missing Persons/Child Welfare/Staff Safety This document exists to provide a comprehensive and clear framework for alerting relevant staff within Plymouth Primary Care Trust to National and Local missing children, young people and families about whom there are child protection and/or child welfare concerns. Policy to assist early identification of missing families, children and young people who have been identified as vulnerable
Title	Protocol For The Alert Of Missing Families, Children And Young People Where There Are Concerns For Their Welfare
Author (s)/Editor (s)	Sue Baldwin
Ratification Date	December 2004, Reviewed in December 2006.
Publication Date	19 January 2006
Review Date	19 December 2008
Retention and Disposal	For permanent retention by Public Information Service
Title of person responsible for review	Sue Baldwin Safeguarding Children/ Named Nurse Child Protection Directorate of Clinical Governance
Target Audience	Clinical Staff Trust wide
Circulation List	Electronic: Via Healthnet Via PCT website (subject to Freedom of information exemptions) Written: Upon request to the Public Information Service on ☎ 01752 272511 Please note this document can be made available in other formats if required please contact the Public Information Service on ☎ (01752) 272511
Supersedes Doc	Missing Persons Protocols
Action Required	Ratified by CPC and then ET December 2004
Contact Details	Sue Baldwin Telephone 272480

DOCUMENT REVIEW HISTORY

Revision No.	Date of Change	Originator of Change	Description of Change
			Replaces missing person Protocols
1	23.12.05	Sue Baldwin	Wording in 1.1
1:2	9/1/2006	Stuart Edmunds	Adjusted to corporate standards
1:3	01/12/2006	Sue Baldwin and Jade Brelsford	Document reviewed and extended for 2 years.

8.1 National Alerts

Responsibilities

8.1.1 Designated Nurse

The Designated Nurse for Child Protection for **PLYMOUTH** receives National missing children, young people and families alerts and disseminates these to the following personnel and departments in her/his area;

- All Named Nurses for Child Protection
- All Maternity Units
- All Child Health Departments
- NHS Direct and West County Ambulances

8.1.2 Named Nurse Child Protection (Deputy or Secretary)

The Named Nurse for Child Protection will ensure all PCT employed staff coming into contact with children young people and families can access information regarding missing children, young people and families by contacting the named nurse or via PCT electronic patient information systems.

8.1.3 PCT staff

Any staff coming into contact with a child young person or family who they are concerned may be missing should check e-pex for any alerts and then notify the Child Protection Named Nurse or contact Named Nurse direct initially.

PROCESS

8.1.4 Named Nurse Child Protection (deputy or secretary) will register all missing children young people or families on e-pex within 48 hours of receipt of notice.

8.1.5 The alert notices will be held by Named Nurse for a period of 12 months from receipt.

8.1.6 A warning screen will then be created which will alert staff of the status of child, young person or family and any actions required. (See Appendix 1)

Monitoring and auditing

8.1.7 Scans will be run on the system on a three monthly basis to identify any children, young people or families who have had contact with Plymouth Primary Care Trust staff.

8.1.8 Found children, young people or families will have episode closed to Child Protection. All episodes will be closed on electronic system and paper copies destroyed 12 months from receipt of notice.

8.2 Liaison/Tracing/Alert Procedure for Children, Families, Young People Missing From Plymouth Area

8.2.1 This procedure should be followed in cases where the staff cannot locate children, young people or where there are Child Protection/Child Welfare concerns.

8.2.2 The children, young people and families who should be considered include

- Children on the Child Protection Register – Plymouth or other areas
- Children who are considered to have additional needs Level 2 on the CAF
- Unborn babies/antenatal mothers where there are alcohol or potential child welfare issues including parental substance misuse, domestic violence and mental health issues.
- Any child whose health, safety or well being may be compromised by the failure to receive primary care services

8.2.3 Staff should use their professional judgement or seek advice if they are not sure about the level of concern.

RESPONSIBILITIES

8.2.4 **PCT staff**

- Notify Children's Social Care if child/, young person is on Child Protection Register or has an open episode of care with Social Services.
- Make local enquiries to establish whereabouts of family/children.
- Discuss with Child Protection Supervisor/Manager. Notify Child Protection Named Nurse immediately.
- Notify Child Protection Named Nurse immediately.

8.2.5 **Named Nurse**

On receipt of information that a child/young person/family is missing – Child Protection Named Nurse will;

1. Put an alert on E-pex.
2. Notify Child Health Information Department.
3. Discuss with Designated Nurse need for further action

8.2.6 **Designated Nurse**

The Designated Nurse will in consultation with Named Nurse decide, according to agreed **LSCB** procedures, whether further action is required and may: -

- Notify all PCT services (distributed through Nurse Advisor) and Hospital Trusts Services
- Nurse Advisors outside the area
- Contact relevant Social Services outside the area as appropriate

Appendix 1 E-pex

8.2.7 Named Nurse Child Protection or Deputy will register the individual by the following process

Named Nurse Child Protection or Deputy will register the individual by the following process;

- Enter the name(s) of the child on e-pex
- Enter the postcode ZZ993WZ (this is the national code for address not known)
- Enter date of birth
- Enter any other information available

A Warning Screen will be created by;

- Insert EVENT
- Enter your name as Child Protection Advisor (staff code)
- Enter the date you received the notification
- Enter w (warning)
- Write your message in the notes section
- Review date – enter 3 months from the date you received the notification, then after each review enter the date of the next review in a further 3 months.
- Finish date – to be entered after 12 months from receipt of notification unless the child has been found in which case you would enter that date. When entering the finish date make sure the review date is left blank. (The record will continue to be displayed in red on the Patient Master Index until the day after the finish date has been entered.)

Scan

- Child protection will run a scan, which will show the review dates coming up and will be sorted by review date. The scan be run on a regular basis so that closing is appropriate.

SIGNED:

DATE:

9. Children Missing from Education

- 9.1 Where children are absent from school, best practice would be for the school to initially contact parents/carers
- 9.2 Where absences continue or contact is not made, the school will refer to the Education Welfare Service who will visit the home.
- 9.3 In cases where children are not receiving an education, the Policy on Children Missing Education will be followed as below.

Introduction to Children Missing Education

- 9.4 `Our aim is to ensure that every child and young person has the opportunity to fulfil their potential, and no child slips through the net'
DfES `Every Child Matters: Next Steps' 2004

Plymouth City Council is committed to ensuring:

- That all children and young people have access to an appropriate education.
- That all pupils who go missing or are lost from schools in Plymouth and move to other areas are speedily located.
- Support is given to other LAs to locate their own missing/lost pupils.

- 9.5 The LA believes that it can best achieve this if its procedures are underpinned by the relevant statutory requirements in relation to missing/lost pupils; that they interconnect with the DfES central S2S Lost Pupils database (School to School) and are consistent with and support local child protection best practice.

- 9.6 The LA will therefore ensure that all Plymouth schools:

- Are made fully aware of their responsibilities in relation to missing/lost pupils and
- Are properly supported to meet these responsibilities.

- 9.7 This work should be seen within the context of the wider remit of the Local Authority to safeguard the welfare of all children.

- 9.8 The LA will therefore closely monitor the operation of its missing/lost children procedures in order to ensure best practice with regard to child protection.

9.9 Background and Government Guidance

- 9.9.1 In 2002 the Department for Education and Skills set a target in its strategic framework

document that stated by 31 December 2005, robust multi-agency systems will be in place in each LA to identify and track children missing education or at risk of doing so.

- 9.9.2 **The definition of Children Missing Education** in this document refers to all children and young people of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll, nor being educated otherwise (e.g. privately or in alternative provision) and who have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time (usually agreed as four weeks or more).
- 9.9.3 In paragraph 17.97 of the **Victoria Climbié Inquiry Report 2003**, Lord Laming recommends that front-line staff in each of the agencies which regularly come into contact with families with children must ensure that in each new contact basic information about the child is recorded. "This must include the child's name, address, age, the name of the child's primary carer, the child's GP and the name of the child's school if the child is of school age. Gaps in this information should be passed on to the relevant authority in accordance with local arrangement". *Note:* The relevant authority in Plymouth is the Education Welfare Service
- 9.9.4 **Ofsted** published the report **Key Stage 4: towards a more flexible curriculum**, in June 2003, which highlighted the large proportion of unsatisfactory provision for pupils who were not at school. The report recommended that the exchange of information on the attainment and needs of pupils involved in alternative programmes out of school should be improved to secure better monitoring of and accountability for their progress. It also recommended that better systems for tracking pupils missing from school rolls should be put in place and maintained.
- 9.9.5 In September 2003, the Green Paper **Every Child Matters** set out the Government's aim to ensure that every child and young person has the opportunity to fulfill their potential, and no child slips through the net. The Green Paper set out five outcomes which services working with children, young people and families should work towards: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and economic well-being.
- 9.9.6 The **Children Act 2004** places a duty on all agencies to work together to promote the welfare of children and to share information. This principle underpins this policy and there is an expectation that all agencies will work together to ensure children are safely on a school roll.
- 9.9.7 Adopting the process steps in this guidance will help the LA meet statutory duties, relating to identifying children missing from education, plus those at risk of going missing, helping them move back into education (or alternative provision) and maintaining contact to prevent them slipping through the net again. This will help ensure all children and young people receive the universal services to which they are entitled.

9.10 Why do Children go Missing from Education?

- 9.10.1 There is considerable research available which identifies the reason for children and

young people being 'missing from school'. The most common reasons include:

- Failing to be registered at a school at age 5.
- Failing to make a successful transition.
- Frequent moves of house including periods of homelessness or periods in a refuge.
- Family breakdown.
- Exclusion (formal and informal).
- Persistent truancy leading to non attendance (especially in Years 10 and 11).
- Mid-year transfer of school.
- Families moving into a new area.
- Disaffection resulting in pupil and/or parent dissatisfaction with the school and the parent withdrawing the pupil or 'being asked to leave'.

9.11 Vulnerable Groups

9.11.1 In Plymouth the LA, schools and other agencies are committed to meeting the needs of vulnerable pupils. Certain vulnerable groups of children and young people are more likely to be affected by the factors listed above and include:

- **Looked After Children (LAC)**

LAC have top priority in the admissions criteria for schools. Plymouth's Looked After Children Education Team, work closely with care managers, Education Welfare and Admissions to support access to a school place.

- **Ethnic Minority, Refugee and Asylum Seeking Children and Economic Migrants**

Several services work closely to support these potentially vulnerable children and young people, including the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS), Admissions and the Education Welfare Service (EWS).

- **Travellers**

The Traveler Education Service (TES) has clear procedures for children who are deemed missing and work closely with other LAs to ensure that children are located.

- **Children living in refuges**

The EWS have developed links with the police and refuges to ensure effective

channels of communication. The EWS is represented on the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) process.

- **Children with Special Educational Needs**
The Statutory Assessment and Review Process ensures that those who have a Statement of SEN have access to appropriate education.
- **Permanently excluded pupils**
School staff have a responsibility to notify the Inclusion Officer of any pupil who is permanently excluded. Processes have been established in accordance with the law and DfES guidance which are well known to officers and school staff.
- **Those at risk of abuse**
Child protection procedures are agreed on a multi-agency basis through the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) and training is provided to services and schools. The Senior Education Welfare Officer (SEWO) (Lead Officer for Child Protection) ensures effective links with all relevant LA functions. All agencies use the Common Assessment Framework which outlines actions to be taken when there are any concerns about children with additional, unmet needs.

9.12 Implementing Change

9.12.1 The Senior Education Officer (Behaviour, Attendance and Family Support and the named Lead Officer for CME (Senior EWO) :

- Provide clear leadership and a well communicated strategy, linking up with developments arising from the Children Act 2004.
- Support the implementation of effective processes and systems.
- Develop the competencies and capabilities needed to support these improvements.

9.13 Principles on which the work will be based

9.13.1 The principles which should be adopted by all agencies (including the LA as corporate parent) who are responsible for locating children who go missing from education, include:

- The safety of the child is paramount
- Parents/carers are the custodians of the welfare and well-being of their children when the children are not in school
- The primary objective is for local (and other agencies) to work together to locate and return the child to a safe environment
- Child protection procedures are triggered where there are concerns that a child

may be at risk of harm or suffering harm

- Agency actions under this guidance will link as appropriate with actions required under related protocols.
- Services will be put in place to ensure that when a child or young person is found s/he receives the necessary ongoing support to enable her/him to live in a stable, safe environment and attend school.

9.14 Reducing the Risk of Children Going Missing from Education

9.14.1 Existing good practice broadly falls into three categories:

- Measures to reduce the likelihood that children and young people fall out of the education system, such as audits of the rolls and registers of schools
- Measures to identify and locate children missing education, such as truancy sweeps and the provision of named points of contact to receive notification of children and young people from other agencies (Education Welfare Service)
- Measures to re-engage the missing with appropriate educational provision, such as multi-agency panels to broker admissions, (exceptional provision panel and hard to place).

9.15 Identifying Children Missing Education

9.15.1 To limit the opportunity of children and young people becoming lost to the education system Plymouth LA intends to develop its pupil tracking system in order to:

- Locate, monitor and track all school aged children who are not on a school roll.
- Act as a link with other statutory bodies and services to ensure that all children missing education are promptly identified and re-engaged with educational provision.
- Implement a range of systematic processes and procedures to track potentially vulnerable children who leave Plymouth with an unknown destination.

9.15.2 The EWS requires all schools to notify their EWO of any pupil who has not attended school for a period of four weeks for any reason. In addition, the Education (Pupils Registration) Regulations 1995, require schools to inform the LA when pupils have been absent for a continuous period of 10 days with no explanation. The EWS works with all other relevant agencies e.g. Youth Offending Team (YOT), Connexions PAs, Social Care and voluntary agencies to improve attendance.

9.16 Involvement and Responsibilities of each Service

9.16.1 The Role of the Local Authority (LA)

The SEWO (Child Protection) is the LA designated officer for children missing from education.

It is the LA's responsibility to ensure that all school-aged children are in receipt of suitable and efficient education appropriate to their age, aptitude and ability whether at school or otherwise.

9.16.2 The Role of Management Information Systems and Information Management Team

Each term all LA Maintained Schools, including Nursery and Special Schools, provide Census files containing all pupils on roll on a specific date. These files are checked thoroughly to ensure that there are no duplicate pupils (i.e. the same pupil at more than one school) in Plymouth or that if a pupil has transferred from one Plymouth school to another the correct Unique Pupil Number (UPN) has been retained. This exercise is carried out three times a year in January, May and September. All LAs receive a listing of 'duplicate' pupils throughout the country and a further checking exercise is carried out to ensure that the 'duplicates' are either genuine i.e. two pupils with the same name and date of birth or it can be useful in identifying other LAs where pupils have moved to and to ensure that pupils retain their original UPN.

The Information Management Team (IMT) uses the Census returns from schools to update the Education Management System (EMS) with those details of child and young people who have moved schools or left. Pupil records are updated with new school details and make pupil record inactive where appropriate (i.e. Transfer out of the area).

Children who fail to arrive at new school/Local Authority are notified to Education Welfare Service with any additional known information for further investigation. The Information Management team promotes the use of the S2S website to schools.

9.16.3 The Role of the Education Welfare Service

When a child or young person is referred to the EWS by a school or other agency/body the case will be open until the child or young person is back in school, or it is confirmed that the child or young person is no longer living within the authority.

Staff from the EWS and the Police undertake truancy sweeps and school age pupils found out of school will be stopped and enquiries made as to their educational status. If necessary the pupil will be escorted back to school. If the child or young person is found to be without a school place the relevant procedures will be implemented. Information concerning pupils identified during Truancy Sweeps may be shared with colleagues from the YOT and Connexions.

The EWS has a statutory duty to inspect school registers and ensure that they are being kept in accordance with regulations.

When another LA contacts the EWS in Plymouth regarding a child or young person who is believed to have moved into the area the EWS will check the EMS database to establish if the child or young person is on roll at a Plymouth school. If they are, the EWO for the school will confirm with the school that the child or young person is attending.

If a child or young person cannot be identified as having registered at a school and an address in Plymouth is included in the enquiry paperwork, the EWO will make a home visit to that address. This will be to establish if the child or young person is residing there and what education arrangements have been made for the child or young person. Support will be offered if necessary.

Outcomes of this work will be shared with the referring authority.

9.16.4 The role of the Admissions Team

The Admissions Team has responsibility for:

- The co-ordination of admissions to reception classes, ensuring, in cooperation with primary admission authorities, that no more than a single offer of a reception class place is made to applicants for Plymouth schools.
- The coordination of admission arrangements for pupils transferring from primary to secondary school, ensuring, in cooperation with secondary admission authorities and other LAs, that Plymouth resident pupils receive no more than a single offer of a secondary school place on the national allocation date.
- Processing requests for in-year admissions and transfer of school.
- Identifying through the Authority's data systems and other agencies those children who require the allocation of a school place (for the major intakes at reception and secondary transfer).

To contribute to the work of ensuring that all pupils are on a school roll and attending school, the Admissions Team works as follows:

- Ensures that Looked After Children are the highest priority for admission for all admitting authorities consulting with the PLACE Team.
- Ensures that advice about admissions and support with the application procedure is readily available for families recently arrived from abroad.
- Carefully considers each request for a transfer of school, ensuring that parents are aware of the implications of a change of school and discouraging the request where appropriate; ensuring, at every opportunity, that parents are advised not to withdraw their children from school without first having secured

an alternative school place.

- Contributes to the maintenance of an efficient pupil database which, following liaison with schools and parents as necessary, records the school places offered.
- Shares information with other LAs and admission authorities regarding individual pupil placements within their schools.
- Pursues referrals and investigates those cases where pupils fail to take up school places or where it becomes evident that a child or young person is out of school and refers to EWS where appropriate.

9.16.5 The role of the Inclusion Team

The Inclusions Officer is responsible for recording and reporting all exclusions and therefore must be informed of all exclusions from school (both permanent and fixed term). It is expected that all schools will follow both the DfES Statutory Guidance on Exclusion from School and local guidance.

In cases where it is identified that a school has imposed an unofficial/illegal exclusion, the Inclusions Officer will inform the SEO who will inform the school.

Procedures are in place to support and monitor the successful reintegration back into a permanent provision.

9.16.6 The role of Schools

When a pupil fails to start at a new school when expected:

When a pupil is expected to join the school either at a normal time of starting (e.g. Nursery, Reception or Year 7) or at any time and he/she does not arrive, the school should first try to make contact with the parents by phone or letter. If after one week no contact has been made the school should contact the Admissions Department to find out if the child had been registered elsewhere. After two weeks the school should complete a referral to the EWS who will follow their procedures for 'missing pupils'.

Prolonged absence:

If a pupil is absent for a prolonged period or fails to return from a holiday or a fixed term exclusion the school should follow the normal procedures for investigating pupil absence (i.e. telephone calls, letters, invitations to meetings at the school etc). If the child or young person does not return to school the absence will be unauthorised and should be referred to the EWS who will follow their procedures for 'missing pupils'. The pupil **should not be removed from roll** until the EWO has ascertained the pupil's whereabouts and safety or has confirmed that the pupil is registered at another school or is being educated otherwise. If the pupil is not located the school will follow the S2S procedure as detailed in this document.

Regulations about when a school may delete a pupil's name from its Admissions Register

There are strict rules on when schools can delete pupils from their admissions register. These are outlined in Regulation 9 of the of the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 as amended

Removal from roll for any reason other than those specified above is illegal.

Home-based Education:

In the event of a parent informing the school that s/he is removing the child or young person to educate him/her at home, the Education Other Than at School officer, with responsibility for monitoring the provision for children not in school, should be informed. Arrangements will be made for the LA to satisfy itself that the education being provided is 'suitable and efficient'.

Fixed Term Exclusions:

In the event of a pupil being excluded for a fixed term the school must provide work. On the 6th school day of a fixed term exclusion the responsibility remains with the school to provide full-time educational activities. The Authority will make every effort to support this.

If a pupil fails to return to school after fixed term exclusion the school should treat the absence as an unauthorised absence and contact the EWS.

Actions a school must take when a pupil's name is deleted from the Admissions Register

- (i) When a pupil is deleted from the Admission register the school must clearly indicate the date and the reason for the removal from roll. In the event of a pupil moving to another school the name of the school should be indicated and the pupil's records should be sent to the new school within 15 days.
- (ii) When a pupil's name has been deleted from the register, the school must use an electronic common transfer form to send the information via the Teachernet Secure School to School Data Transfer Website (S2S) to the new school, or the Lost Pupil Database (LPD).
- (iii) The school must also notify the LA within 10 school days. Information regarding normal transition transfers need not be made as these details can be obtained from the Admissions Section.

The Use of School to School Data Transfer Website (S2S)

Schools are aware of the statutory responsibility placed on governors and teachers for the management of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children. This is underpinned by a statutory responsibility to use an electronic common transfer form to send and collect information via the TeacherNet Secure School to School Data Transfer Website (S2S).

It is recognised that these procedures will only function effectively if all Plymouth

schools are committed to the principle that:

Whenever a child or young person joins or leaves a school then a common transfer file **must** accompany him/her.

The Local Authority will ensure that all Plymouth schools are properly supported to meet these responsibilities.

When another LA contacts Plymouth City Council seeking help regarding a missing child or young person, the EWS and Information Management Team will search for the missing child or young person on the EMS database and the Lost Pupil Database. If the child or young person is found, the enquiring LEA will be informed.

Actions Required:

- (i) If a school knows which school a child or young person is moving to the school should ensure that an electronic Common Transfer File (CTF) is sent to the receiving school via s2s as quickly as possible.
- (ii) Should a child or young person leave a Plymouth school without notice being given, the school should try to make contact with the parents. If after 10 days of non school attendance the school has been unable to contact the parents the school should contact their EWO who will work with the school and other agencies to make reasonable efforts to try and identify the child or young person's current whereabouts/destination. **Should the child be on the Child Protection Register or should the school have particular child protection concerns about the child the school should immediately contact the local Social Care Team and S.E.W.O (Child Protection)**
- (iii) If after 20 working days such efforts prove unsuccessful the school should remove the child or young person's name from its roll and create a CTF using the codes XXXXXXXX or MMMMMMMM. If a child or young person has left the school but the school do not know where they have gone, they should be uploaded to s2s using the code XXXXXXXX. If the child or young person has left the school and the destination is known but the establishment is unable to accept a CTF (i.e. an Independent school / PRU) then a CTF will be created and sent to MMMMMMMM (part of the LPD). The file is uploaded onto S2S and the child or young person's details automatically go onto the "Lost Pupil Database" section of the site.
- (iv) If a file is sent to a known school or LA but comes back as rejected by that school or LA these should be treated as the child or young person now being missing from education and should be uploaded using the code XXXXXXXX to the Lost Pupil Database as above.
- (v) Schools should check S2S regularly to look for CTFs of new pupils, which have been sent to them. If a new pupil is admitted to a school and the CTF is not available schools should contact Management Information Centre to request that a search is made of the Lost Pupil's Database for a matching record using names or former names, date of birth and gender. The pupil's CTF can then be

forwarded to them.

- (vi) If a school has previously sent a lost child CTF to the Lost Pupils Database and is then contacted by a school at which the lost child has subsequently registered then either:
- The school which sent the CTF to the Lost Pupils Database should create a new CTF and send this to the receiving school and request that the LA download the original CTF and delete it; or
 - The receiving school should request its own LA download the original CTF from the Lost Pupil's Database.

If a child or young person leaves a Plymouth school in order to be home educated by his/her parents, the school on receiving written confirmation of the parents' intentions, should send a copy to the LA and then remove the child or young person's name from the school roll. A CTF should be created using MMMMMMMM, so that the CTF goes into the database of children and young people who have moved outside the maintained system. If the parent informs the LA in writing the LA will inform the school.

9.16.7 The role of Other Agencies (e.g. Social Care, Health, Youth Offending Team, Connexions, Voluntary Agencies)

If a member of staff from another agency identifies a young person, who appears to not be on roll at a school or not be attending school regularly, that member of staff should contact the Education Welfare Service. The EWS will notify the referrer of the outcome of the enquiry.

The EOTAS Officer, with responsibility for alternative provision, will keep detailed records of all pupils receiving alternative provision and where the provision is taking place.

The Exclusions Officer will keep records of all pupils who have been excluded from school, both permanent and fixed term.

USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

Education Welfare Service	307404/307405
School Admissions	307470/307471
Plymouth Looked After Children In Education (PLACE)	307114/307009
Information Management Team (IMT) Administrator	307425
Child Protection Registration Administration Gingko House	306348

10. Housing Department

- 10.1 Staff within the Housing Department, particularly in the Homelessness Service may be approached by a young person who has run away and who, as a consequence, is seeking assistance with accommodation.
- 10.2 If as part of an assessment process staff are concerned that the young person may have 'run away' or be a 'missing person' they should alert the Police.

11. Voluntary and Independent Agencies

- 11.1 Some Voluntary/Independent Agencies are well placed to identify or respond to children and young people who have run away or go missing or are at risk of running away.
- 11.2 Roles for voluntary/independent agencies include:
 - Operation of robust child protection procedures and confidentiality policies that have been endorsed by The Local Safeguarding Children Board or an equivalent forum
 - Being clear with the child or young person at the outset about these policies and the need to share information with a third party in some circumstances
 - Attending multi-agency strategy or planning meetings to share information and clarifying roles and responsibilities if needed
 - Liaising appropriately with enquiries from the police, and/or children's services trying to find the child or young person.
- 11.3 Voluntary/independent agencies providing accommodation on behalf of the local authority must follow written procedures if a child or young person runs away or is missing.

12. Connexions

- 12.1 The Connexions Service is well placed to identify or respond to children and young people who have run away or go missing or are at risk of running away.
- 12.2 Roles for the Connexions Service include:
 - Operation of robust child protection procedures and confidentiality policies that have been endorsed by The Local Safeguarding Children Board or an equivalent forum
 - Being clear with the child or young person at the outset about these policies and the need to share information with a third party in some circumstances

- Attending multi-agency strategy or planning meetings to share information and clarifying roles and responsibilities if needed
- Liaising appropriately with enquiries from the police, and/or children's services trying to find the child or young person.

13. Publicity and Communication

- 13.1 The police have responsibility for the timing, advising and the involvement of the media. They will do this in consultation with parents, carers, social care staff and partner agencies.