

**RUNAWAY AND MISSING
FROM HOME AND CARE
MISSING CHILDREN
PROTOCOL**



Keeping People Safe



June 2015

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Statement of Commitments

The aim of this protocol is to ensure that Police and Health and Social Care work together effectively and that the best interests of the child underpin every aspect of working with children and young people.

The statutory parties and signatories to this protocol are: -

Health and Social Care Board (HSCB)

Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI)

The document updates and replaces the last edition of the protocol which was issued in May 2012. It is now available from HSCB website www.hscb.hscni.net or www.psni.police.uk .

Your comments on this protocol are of great value because they are based on your knowledge and experience. It is considered that the guidance is a live document and therefore we are content to receive comments which will be reviewed and taken into account in future revisions. If you have noticed an omission, or you can think it can be improved in any other way, please get in touch with us at: -

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Foreword

This Regional Protocol replaces and updates the 2012 version issued to PSNI and Health and Social Care Trusts. It is designed to support effective collaborative safeguarding responses by Police and Social Services in respect of children who runaway or who go missing from their homes or care placements and builds upon developments in our knowledge and experience.

The Protocol is set out in two main sections. Children who runaway or go missing from home; and Police involvement where Looked After Children are at risk or who go missing from their placement. The Protocol also complements existing guidance in relation to child protection, Protocol for Joint Investigation (2014), Planning for Looked After Children and Sexual Exploitation of Children and Young People.

The revision draws heavily on the experience of practitioners and reflects the growing confidence, respect and trust between staff working in this difficult area of work. It takes into account the policy and research changes since the last revision in 2012 and in particular provides a more detailed understanding of the risks of sexual exploitation when young people are missing.

It will be important that the Protocol is supported by effective training for Police Officers and Social Workers in responding to Missing Children. The Protocol will also be kept under review and updates issued which will be based on important significant changes in either policy or best practice.



Tony Rodgers
Assistant Director of Social Care and Children
Health and Social Care Board (HSCB)



George Clarke
Detective Chief Superintendent
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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Regional Guidance document is designed to support an effective collaborative safeguarding response by Health and Social Care Trusts (HSC Trust) and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) in respect of children and young people who run away or go missing from their own homes or from a care placement.
- 1.2 This Guidance is set out in two main sections; Children who runaway or go missing from their own home; and Police involvement where Looked After Children are at risk or who go missing.
- 1.3 The Guidance complements and sets in context existing single and multiagency guidance relating to Child Protection, Children in Need, Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Care Planning for Looked After Children, and Missing Persons.

2. PRINCIPLES

- The safety of the child is the paramount consideration. Police Officers and Social Workers will share information in order to work co-operatively to effect the safe recovery of children who are missing, or to safely resolve issues arising within residential units;
- Child Protection Procedures will be followed, where relevant, in respect of all children. This includes where sexual exploitation may be a factor or where a child is associating with individuals, either peers or adults, who give rise to concern;
- The PSNI will act on any report of a child missing from care;
- Every missing child who returns home, or to Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust accommodation, will be spoken to with a view to establishing the reason for the missing episode.

3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 For the purposes of this Guidance the following definitions apply:

Child – Child and young person under 18 years of age (this can include persons under 19 years of age where the child has special needs).

Care – In care/looked after – applies to all children and young people who are looked after by a HSC Trust, either under Article 21, or subject of a Care Order under Article 50, or an Interim Care Order under Article 57 of the Children (NI) Order 1995. It also applies to children who are the subject of an Emergency Protection Order, subject to Police Protection under Article 65, Wardship or subject of a Care Order to another Authority but being supervised on its behalf by the HSC Trust. A looked after child who is the subject of a Care Order may be placed at home with his/her parent.

Away from Placement without Authorisation – A Looked After Child whose whereabouts is known but is not at their placement or place they are expected to be and the carer has concerns.

Missing – The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) definition of missing is; anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character, or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.

Low risk – ‘There is no apparent threat or danger to the child or the public.’

Medium risk – ‘The risk posed is likely to place the child in danger or they are a threat to themselves or others.’

High risk – ‘The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the subject is in danger through their own vulnerability; or may have been the victim of a serious crime; or the risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the public is in danger.’

Missing from Care – a Looked After Child who is not at their placement or the place where they are expected to be and their whereabouts are not known.

Young Runaway – a child who has run away from their home or care placement, or feels they have been forced or lured to leave.

Absconded – Absconding refers to a Looked After Child who is missing and is subject to bail conditions as a result of a Criminal Court Order or is subject to a Secure Accommodation Order.

Child Sexual Exploitation – Child Sexual Exploitation is a form of sexual abuse in which a person(s) exploits, coerces and/or manipulates a child or young person into engaging in some form of sexual activity in return for something the child needs or desires and or/for the gain of the person(s) perpetrating or facilitating the abuse.

Fear of what might happen if they do not comply can also be a significant influencing factor”

<http://www.safeguardingni.org/>

Abduction – A person shall be guilty of an offence if, knowingly and without lawful authority or reasonable excuse, he takes a child who is in care, the subject of an Emergency Protection Order, or in Police Protection, away from the responsible person, or keeps the child away, or induces, assists, or incites such a child to run away or stay away from the responsible person.

4. JOINT WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

4.1 To ensure an effective joint agency response to safeguarding runaway and missing including Looked After Children a formal on-going arrangement should be established between HSC Trusts and Police Districts. Key elements of this arrangement are;

- The Public Protection Unit (PPU) Inspector will act as a single point of contact (SPOC). This is to provide a mechanism for liaison and joint planning where a child or Looked After Child is considered to be at risk of going missing or is repeatedly missing.
- A senior Trust manager (Grade 8A or above) nominated to take the lead in respect of the Trust’s response to the issue of runaway and missing children and the safeguarding of Looked After Children.
- An operational liaison group of key frontline HSC Trusts managers and Police Officers, meeting monthly, to share information and analyse data, identify patterns of risk, develop preventative strategies and implement and monitor action plans.
- A strategic Partnership Group of senior HSC Trust Managers and Police Officers, meeting at least 6 monthly to identify and resolve any barriers to effective joint working.

- A nominated Police Officer will act as a liaison point between the Police and children's home staff within each Children's Home.

5. RUNAWAY AND MISSING FROM HOME

- 5.1 The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) Interim Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons 2013 states;

“The importance of dealing with missing persons correctly cannot be emphasised too strongly. All such reports must be assessed and understood to ensure that the response is appropriate in the circumstances. In some instances it is the first indicator that a serious crime has occurred; many murder investigations start as missing persons. Going missing and being absent should be recognised as a wider safeguarding issue; as a symptom of other problems or issues. This is strongly evidenced by the accelerated report of the Office of the Children's Commissioner that shows missing as one of the key indicators of child sexual exploitation.”
(college of Policing App for Police Offices
<http://www.app.college.police.uk>)

- 5.2 It is important to assess the potential risk in every situation but also to consider repeat incidents as a continuum of risk. The risk emanates from circumstances in that person's life that lead them to go missing and the risk does not go away just because they have returned, unless the cause has been dealt with. Furthermore, to consider someone who goes missing to be at risk of harm underplays the situation and it is more correct to consider them to be actually suffering harm and therefore in need of safeguarding’.

5.3 Risk Assessment

The ACPO Missing Person Guidance definition of a missing person is;

Missing – ‘Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk to themselves or another.’ Missing persons can be considered low, medium or high risk depending on circumstances.

Low risk – ‘There is no apparent threat or danger to the child or the public.’

Medium risk – ‘The risk posed is likely to place the child in danger or they are a threat to themselves or others.’

High risk – ‘The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the subject is in danger through their own vulnerability; or may have been the victim of a serious crime; or the risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the public is in danger.’ (Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons – ACPO 2010)

5.4 Initial Report

When the Police receive a report of a child having runaway or that a child is missing it will be necessary for the Police to determine the level of risk in relation to the child and the current circumstances.

The following set of questions can be used to assist this decision making.

1. What is the specific concern in this instance?
2. What has been done so far to trace this individual?
3. Is this significantly out of character?
4. Are there any specific medical needs?
5. Are they likely to be subjected to crime?
6. Are they likely to be the victim of abuse?
7. Are they currently at risk of Sexual Exploitation?
8. Are they likely to attempt suicide?
9. Do they pose a danger to other people?
10. Is there any other information relevant to their absence?

They should also ascertain if the child is on the Child Protection Register or is known to Social Services.

5.5 Risk Assessment

The assessment of risk is often a difficult process and must be carefully considered. Questions to assist in this process are available as part of the 2010 Guidance and on the Police Online Knowledge Area (POLKA)¹. <http://www.college.police.uk/en/16173.htm>

Out of character behaviour is a strong indicator of risk but must not

¹ POLKA is a restricted online collaboration tool that enables knowledge and information sharing across the police service.

lead to complacency over those who are frequently absent or missing. It is not correct to consider that these circumstances indicate no or low risk. Careful consideration must be given to all reports to ensure that an absence of information indicating that the person has come to harm is not mistaken as a demonstration that the person is safe and well. Unless a person's whereabouts are properly established, e.g., by actually seeing them, it is not possible to be certain of the risks they face.

There is clear evidence that those who exploit children are mindful of official processes and will seek to circumvent them and this must be considered when dealing with absences. It is common for offenders to time their abuse to coincide with the normal rhythms of a person's life.

Other specific vulnerabilities for some children such as those with Child Protection Plans, disabled children, gang-associated children etc. could all result in additional risks during periods of absence or missing. Each child and young person(s) situation must be carefully considered in order to provide the appropriate support, help and protection.

5.6 Police Response

The Police response will be determined by the actions set out in the 'Police Action in Respect of Missing Persons' Service Procedure' (29/2009). <http://www.acpo.police.uk> As part of the investigation into the missing incident the Police will consider whether a safeguarding, or child in need referral should be made to a HSC Trust. Whilst a decision to refer will be based upon the risk assessment and the circumstances surrounding the missing episode the following situation should lead to a referral being made;

- The child is on the Child Protection Register or is an active social work case;
- The missing episode is considered to be high risk;
- The missing episode is considered to be medium risk where there is an indication that the child is a 'runaway' i.e. forced or lured to go missing. This would include concerns about CSE; (If you are concerned that a young person is vulnerable to CSE or suspected he/she is a victim of CSE the ACPCs Regional Policy and Procedures should be initiated and the Regional Interim Guidance on the management of CSE implemented. If the child is not known to Social Services a

referral should be completed using a UNOCINI Referral and Social Services will complete the CSE Risk Assessment and forwarded to the relevant Gateway Team).

- A child has been reported as missing on 3 separate occasions within a short timescale.

5.7 Management of the Return

This should be considered as part of the investigation which cannot be concluded until the full circumstances of the child going missing are understood and appropriate safeguarding measures put in place.

It is also important that consideration is given to how the return will be managed. This is particularly important with those considered to be high risk, are being harmed and/or are frequently reported as absent/missing. Consideration should be given to how the person should be dealt with on first contact and how they should be debriefed. A supportive approach, actively listening and responding to the child's needs, will have a greater chance of preventing the child from going missing again and safeguarding them from other risks.

In some cases it will be for the Police to appropriately manage the return and undertake the safe and well check. However for those cases already known to Social Services this should be part of an agreed jointly planned arrangement.

Whilst the vast majority of care placements will be providing positive parenting and seeking to engage constructively with children there may be some instances where the child is running from the actual placement. In recognition of this the Field Social Worker will have a role in the safe and well-being or independent return interviews to be assured that the opportunity is provided for the child to express any such concerns.

5.8 Safe and Well Check

The role of the Police in missing persons investigations is to protect life and deal with any offences that come to light. ACPO Interim Guidance in respect of missing persons 2013, states that *“there is a responsibility on the police to ensure that the person is safe and well and has the opportunity to disclose any relevant issues. This may be conducted by Police or other professionals, but the police must be confident that there is nothing untoward that has been missed.”*

There is a responsibility on the Police to ensure that the child is safe and well as soon as possible after a child reported missing has been found. The purpose is to check for any indications that the child has suffered harm, where and with whom they have been and to give them an opportunity to disclose any offending by or against them.

This may be conducted by the Police or by other professionals, but the Police must be confident that there is nothing untoward that has been missed. It is common for missing persons, especially children, to be unwilling to engage in this process. If this is the case it is important to record the child's demeanour, their physical state and any factors that may be relevant later as part of the investigation.

Police will conduct safe and well checks in the following circumstances:

1. Looked After Children when the care professional or the child has alleged that the child has been the victim of a crime immediately before or during the time they went missing;
2. The Public Protection CSE Officer will monitor and review children who have been identified as being high risk of CSE and ensure regular contact with those children and Social Services;
3. Any persons where information has been received that they have been the victim of a crime immediately before or during the period they were missing.
4. Where a child with no connections with social services or other statutory agencies goes missing on 2 or more occasions in a rolling 6 month period.

It is recognised that Social Workers are professionally trained in respect of looking after children in care and that they are best suited to engage with the children when they return to home. Any information gleaned from the return interview must be shared with Police at the earliest opportunity.

5.9 Independent Return Interviews

When a child is found, they must be offered an independent return interview. An independent return interview provides the opportunity to uncover information that can help protect children from the risk

of going missing again and from risks they may have been exposed to while missing.

The interview should be carried out within 72 hours of the child returning to their home. It should be an in depth interview and will normally be undertaken by a Trust Social Worker, either the Case Social Worker for an Open Case or a Gateway Social Worker where a new referral has been received from the Police. Whether it is a new referral, where the interview will be combined with a UNOCINI Initial Assessment, or where the interview is undertaken on an existing case it must expressly cover the areas outlined in appendix A. Children sometimes need to build up trust with a person before they will discuss in depth the reasons why they ran away. Therefore it may be appropriate for the interview to be carried out by another professional with whom the child has a positive or existing relationship. In such cases it remains the responsibility of the Trust to ensure the interview takes place and that any follow up actions are carried out.

Safe and well checks and independent return interviews provide an opportunity to inform case planning, for wider strategic planning and for professionals to take into account children's views. The outcomes of the checks and interviews should therefore be recorded on Case Files so that they can be shared with professionals. Parents and carers should be offered the opportunity to provide any relevant information and intelligence of which they may be aware. This should be appropriately shared with Police to help prevent further instances of the child running away and identify early the support needed for them.

5.10 Data on Children who Runaway or Go Missing

Data on all episodes should be analysed regularly through the joint working arrangements in order to map problems and patterns, and to develop prevention and intervention strategies.

6. POLICE INVOLVEMENT IN SITUATIONS RELATING TO LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

6.1 In general, police involvement where Looked After Children are concerned will fall into one of two categories. Firstly, those situations which require a general policing response such as criminal damage within children's homes, assaults within children's homes or breach of bail situations; and secondly, those situations where police support is necessary to safeguard the welfare of the Looked After Child such as where children are subject to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), put themselves or others at risk through their behaviour including criminality or where the child goes missing.

6.2 Joint Preventative Planning

The HSC Trust should ensure that every Looked After Child has a clear care or risk management plan in place which outlines the potential for the Looked After Child to go missing from their placement and identifies any likely risks. This should outline the measures to be taken to reduce the likelihood of the Looked After Child going missing and to reduce the risk to the Looked After Child whilst away from the placement. A Young Person Profile form Part A should be completed for each Looked After Child (appendix B).

In cases where the assessment indicates a likelihood that the Looked After Child will go missing or will put themselves or others at risk this information should be shared with the PSNI SPOC within the relevant Police District and appropriate joint planning arrangements set in place. In these situations the Young Person Profile Part A should be shared with the Police.

6.3 Criminal Damage within Homes

In the event that criminal damage has been caused to, or in, the home, an assessment will be required as to the seriousness of the incident. The appropriate member of staff, or carer, should carry out this assessment in consultation with a Senior Manager/Out of Hours Service. This is in an effort to decide the most appropriate course of action, which may not always require a Police response.

Recommendation 6 of the SSI Inspection of Secure Care (2002) states 'HSS Trusts should develop an independent process, at Head of Service level to consider all the facts prior to reaching a decision to

criminally charge any child'. This system should always be used prior to reaching a decision to report a child to the PSNI for damaging HSC Trust property. Unless the situation is one where there is a significant risk to the child concerned, other children or staff members/carers, or the damage to the home is likely to be extensive it would not normally be necessary to request the Police to attend the incident at the time. Where it is decided to proceed with an investigation, or prosecution, the Police will require the minimum of a written statement of complaint and an estimate as to the value of any damage caused.

6.4 Assaults Within Children's Homes

If a member of the Children's Home staff is assaulted by a child resident within the home, it is a personal decision by that member of staff whether or not he/she wishes to make a formal complaint. The HSC Trust is both the employer of the member of staff and Corporate Parent to the child. The individual staff member concerned must be offered the immediate opportunity to discuss the situation with the unit or other senior Trust Manager.

The HSC Trust will make available a 'Staff Care' service, and any other support mechanisms thought appropriate at the time. It must always be the case that consideration is also given to the needs of the young person involved in the incident.

Where one child assaults another child and the victim states a wish to make a complaint to the police, this should be facilitated by social work staff. The child concerned should be offered the opportunity to discuss the situation with the home or other senior Trust Manager. If the child decides not to make a complaint, Social Work staff should consider if they need to make a complaint to Police on behalf of the young person.

Each incident of assault requires a Risk Assessment to be conducted by the Children's home staff to consider how best to manage the situation. In certain circumstances it may be necessary to invoke the HSCT Trust's Child Protection Procedures. Parents/carers of the victim and assailant will be informed about the assault of a child as soon as reasonably possible after the event by the residential unit staff. If contacted, Police will determine the severity of the assaults as laid down in legislation and will act accordingly.

Allegations of assault on children by staff or carers will be dealt with through the Child Protection Policy and Procedures and where appropriate through Human Resources procedures and Criminal Law.

6.5 Breach of Bail

Where a child is subject to bail conditions, the reporting of a breach of those conditions is separate to the reporting of a child to the police as a missing child. However if the risks surrounding the situation are such that a safeguarding approach is required the protocol set out below should be followed.

6.6 Child Sexual Exploitation

“Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse in which a person(s) exploits, coerces and/or manipulates a child or young person into engaging in some form of sexual activity in return for something the child needs or desires and/or for the gain of the person(s) perpetrating or facilitating the abuse.” (SBNI 2014)

Sexual exploitation can manifest itself in many different forms, including grooming, abuse by an individual who has established a ‘seemingly consensual’ relationship with a child or young person, informal ‘introductions’ to other (potential) perpetrators and the formal prostituting of the child. Children and young people can also find themselves exploited through the production and distribution of sexual images or through exposure to such images. Common to all these scenarios is an imbalance of power in favour of the abuser and some degree of coercion, intimidation, exploitation, violence and/or enticement of the child or young person.

It is important that staff are alert to any signs of possible exploitation and should follow the Interim Regional Guidance – Management of Child Sexual Exploitation Referrals in addition to the actions in relation to absent or missing children herein.

6.7 Abduction

In some instances individuals may allow children to be in their company e.g. to stay in their home or to associate with them in other places, even arranging for transport and without informing the child’s carer of their intentions. They either directly or indirectly encourage them to go missing or to stay away from their carers. This can lead to an increase in the number of children who are reported as missing or

whose absence is unauthorised. Some adults actually target children for the purpose of exploiting their vulnerabilities and as a result serious offences may be committed against these children. Where concerns arise that a child is being encouraged or assisted to leave or remain away from their placement the matter should be discussed with the police and, where appropriate, a strategy meeting held. A plan to address the concerns should be developed. Details on the steps required for the use of Harbourer's Warning Notices can be found in PSNI Service Procedure 27/2010 'Police Response to Child Abduction (Harbouring)' which provides the procedure in relation to the application and enforcement of police powers under Child Abduction (NI) Order 1985 and the Children (NI) Order 1995.

6.8 Looked After Children Trafficked from Abroad and within the UK and Northern Ireland

Some looked After Children may be unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and some of this group may have been trafficked into the UK and are likely to remain under the influence of their traffickers, even whilst they are looked after. The assessment of need to inform the Care Plan must seek to establish:

- Relevant details about the child's background before they came to the UK;
- An understanding of the reasons that the child came to the UK;
- An analysis of the child's vulnerability to remaining under the influence of traffickers.

Child trafficking is the recruitment, harbouring and movement of children within Northern Ireland, as well as cross border, for the purposes of exploitation. This can include child sexual exploitation. For example a child or young person taken from his or place of residence to a house, hotel or some other place to be sexually exploited or abused is actually being trafficked.

The process of assessment of need to inform the Care Plan and related risk assessment will have to be sensitively managed. Provision may have to be made for the child to be in a safe place before an assessment is complete bearing in mind that the child may not be in a position to disclose full information about their circumstances immediately.

In all cases HSC Trust staff and Police Officers should follow the DHSSPS and PSNI Guidance for the welfare and safeguarding of child victims / suspected victims of human trafficking specifically 'Working Arrangements for the Welfare and Safeguarding of Child Victims of Human Trafficking' (February 2011) www.dhsspsni.gov.uk and 'The Pathway for Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Separated Children/Unaccompanied Children Arriving in Northern Ireland (Nov 2013)'. In all suspected cases of trafficking a NRM referral should be made to the UK Human Trafficking Centre. UKHTC@nca.x.gsi.gov.uk

If a separated child, for whom there are concerns about trafficking or other safety issues, goes missing then the response will automatically be categorised as code red- missing high risk as per the procedures set out below.

6.9 Away from Placement without Authorisation and Missing

The aim of this Guidance is to support the safeguarding of Looked After Children whilst at the same time ensuring that the reporting of Looked After Children to the police is responsible and realistic. Children should not normally be reported to the Police when they are away from their placement, for example by returning to their placement later than agreed, or where they leave a placement without permission and there is no suggestion that they are at risk whilst away and their likely intention is to return.

The Guidance cannot anticipate every situation. Staff and Police Officers must continue to exercise professional judgement and act appropriately based upon an assessment of the circumstances of each individual situation. However, decisions must be informed by clear care planning and risk management arrangements.

6.10 Away from Placement without Authorisation

Sometimes a looked after child may be away from their placement without authorisation but where their whereabouts are known. Whilst they are not missing, they may still be placing themselves at risk because of where they are or what activities they are engaged in. Examples for such situations would be where the Looked After Child

chooses to stay at the house of friends and where there is a concern about the risk of CSE; or where staff go looking for a Looked After Child and observe them engaged in risky behaviours in a situation where it is not safe for staff to directly intervene. In these cases the Police should be contacted for assistance. The Police will respond appropriately and the report considered as 'Police Assistance Required'. Any such situations will be followed up by the HSC Trust and a review of the risk management arrangements undertaken.

6.11 Missing

A Missing Person is 'anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk to themselves or another.' Missing persons can be considered low, medium or high risk depending on circumstances.

To assist appropriate decision making a traffic light system (green, amber, red) outlines;

- Key factors and indicators of risk to be considered;
- How a case can move through the system;
- Clear action steps at each stage of the process.

At the point of an initial report to the local Police, it will be necessary for the call taker in discussion with the member of staff or carer making the referral, to determine the level of risk. The following set of questions can be used to assist this decision making.

1. What is the specific concern in this instance?
2. What has been done so far to trace this individual?
3. Is this significantly out of character?
4. Are there any specific medical needs?
5. Are they likely to be subjected to crime?
6. Are they likely to be the victim of abuse?
7. Are they currently at risk of Sexual Exploitation?

8. Are they likely to attempt suicide?
9. Do they pose a danger to other people?
10. Is there any other information relevant to their absence?

HSC staff and carers should be in a position to provide clear detailed information to address these questions.

The assessment of risk is often a difficult process and must be carefully considered. Individual and multi-agency guidance will assist in this process but careful consideration must be given to all reports involving Looked After Children including those for 'requests for Police assistance', and missing Looked After Children are inherently vulnerable and this must be taken into account when assessing risk.

6.12 **LOW RISK - CODE GREEN**

It is unusual for a Looked After Child to be away from their placement in situations where staff do not have a good idea as to their likely whereabouts, have some form of mobile phone contact or some information as to the young person's activities. In these circumstances HSC Trust staff or carers will make a judgement as to the appropriateness of contacting the Police based upon their knowledge of the Looked After Child, the risk assessment and any plans set in place with the Police.

Missing definition - 'Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk to themselves or another.'

Low risk – 'There is no apparent threat or danger to the Looked After Child or the public.'

Key points to think about

- Quantify and grade the likely level of risk on a case by case basis
- Be clear about your role and responsibility to the missing child
- Actively manage the risk – be informed of all relevant information pertaining to the missing child
- Update / brief oncoming staff with up to date information

Stage 1 – Risk Assessment - CODE GREEN	Actions	Action Owner
<p>There is no apparent threat or danger to the child / YP or the public</p>	<p>The Trust is expected to act as a responsible parent would do in such a situation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Try and contact the child by telephone 2. Try calling their friends and family by telephone 3. Check places where the child is known to visit 4. Talk to other children or staff about possible reasons for the absence 5. Keep the situation under review and consider additional actions to ascertain the child's whereabouts. 6. If the child whereabouts are not established or concern increases for whatever reason the child should be considered as missing and the Police notified. 	<p>Residential Unit Staff, Kinship or Foster Carer. 09-17 hrs = Statutory SW/RESWS 17 – 09.00 hrs –</p> <p>HSC staff/carers</p>

	<p>7. Any pattern of a child not being at the place where they are expected to be or being out of touch with staff or carers should be discussed with the home nominated Police Officer or the Police SPOC.</p>	
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6.13 MISSING - CODE AMBER

In situations where a Looked After Child whereabouts cannot be properly established and where the circumstances or the context suggests the young person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another. This includes those situations where a risk assessment has identified specific but not immediate risks to the Looked After Child or to others if they are away from their placement.

Missing definition - 'Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk to themselves or another.'

Medium risk – 'The risk posed is likely to place the subject in danger or they are a threat to themselves or others.'

Stage 2 – Risk Assessment – CODE AMBER	Actions	Action Owner
<p>The presence of the following indicators / risk factors, when considered collectively, point to an immediate grading as AMBER:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The child / YP has a learning difficulty or disability • The current assessment indicates the possibility for the child to self-harm • There is evidence to indicate, at the time of leaving the home, a significant change in the child’s attitude, mood and / or behaviours • There are current concerns within the placement or at school (e.g. bullying, sexuality, racial abuse etc.) • A child / YP on prescribed medication, which if not taken, could be detrimental to his / her health and / or well being • Peer or adult acquaintances, are of concern to residential staff • Clear evidence of use / addiction to drugs, alcohol or solvents • A pattern of going missing, which must be considered in the context of the above factors 	<p>The Residential Manager / Staff/Carer should still undertake Actions 1 - 4 (as at Code Green) as well as contacting Police</p> <p>Agree with PSNI what actions will be undertaken, by whom and timeline for update. Young Person Profile Part B (appendix B) completed and shared with PSNI</p> <p>Notify family – as appropriate</p> <p>Liaise with Field Social Worker</p> <p>PSNI & Trust to record / manage / investigate the missing incident as per Agency Procedure Police protocols</p> <p>Agreed approach to the actions to be taken on the LAC return.</p>	<p>PSNI CMC & Residential Unit Staff / Carer</p> <p>PSNI CMC & IO & Residential Unit Staff / Carer</p> <p>Residential Unit Staff or Statutory SW</p> <p>Residential Unit Staff / Carer</p> <p>PSNI & Trust</p> <p>PSNI & Trust</p>

6.14 MISSING - CODE RED

In situations where a Looked After Child whereabouts cannot be properly established and where the circumstances or the context suggests the young person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another. This includes those situations where a risk assessment has identified specific immediate risks to the Looked After Child or to others if they are away from their placement.

Missing definition - 'Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk to themselves or another.'

High risk – 'The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the subject is in danger through their own vulnerability; or may have been the victim of a serious crime; or the risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the public is in danger.'

Stage 3 – Risk Assessment – CODE RED	Actions	Action Owner
<p>Upgrade code amber to Code Red if the following indicators / risk factors become apparent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information emerges which suggest the child is in the company of peers, or adults, who may exploit his /her vulnerabilities which will place them in immediate danger Information emerges that the child is being removed from placement or being prevented from returning to the placement 	<p>The Residential Manager / Staff should contact Police with updated information</p> <p>Ensure Actions as per Code AMBER have been undertaken</p> <p>Consider convening an Emergency LAC Review or planning meeting</p>	<p>Residential Unit Staff / Carer</p> <p>PSNI CMC & IO & Residential Unit Staff / Carer</p> <p>Residential Unit Manger / Statutory SW and PSNI MPO</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where the time frame is moving into late night, early hours of the morning • Change in weather conditions and child / YP not clothed appropriately 	<p>PSNI & Trust to record / manage / investigate the missing incident as per Agency Procedure and Policy</p>	<p>PSNI & Trust</p>
<p>****Risk Assessment IMMEDIATE CODE RED****</p> <p>The following indicators / risk factors, when considered collectively, and with those in Stage 3 point to an immediate grading as RED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current Assessment indicates risk posed is immediate • The current assessment indicates the likelihood for the child to seriously self-harm • There is a high and significant risk of harm to self or others including through criminal behaviour • From current risk assessment there is clear evidence to indicate definite risk to the child within the community e.g. contact with a known sex or violent offender • There is evidence that a child is misusing alcohol, drugs or solvents, to the extent that it could cause immediate harm • Suspected or confirmed sexual exploitation • There is a concern the child may be the victim of trafficking. 	<p>As for Code Amber above</p> <p>PSNI & Trust to record / manage / investigate the missing incident as per Agency Procedure and Policy</p>	<p>PSNI & Trust</p> <p>PSNI & Trust</p>

6.15 Longer Absences

All absences will be the subject of an on-going review process. When a child is missing for a period of 7 days, a planning meeting must be held, if this has not already taken place. This should include the PSNI PPU Inspector and the HSC Trusts Senior Manager with responsibility for missing children. Each case must be considered on its own merits and it may be necessary to convene a meeting before the 7 day period.

6.16 Management of the Return

This should be considered as part of the investigation which cannot be concluded until the full circumstances of the Looked After Child going missing are understood and appropriate safeguarding measures put in place.

It is also important that consideration is given to how the return will be managed. This is particularly important with those considered to be high risk, are being harmed and/or are frequently reported as absent/missing. Consideration should be given to how the person should be dealt with on first contact and how they should be debriefed. A supportive approach, actively listening and responding to the Looked After Child needs, will have a greater chance of preventing the Looked After Child from going missing again and safeguarding them from other risks.

Without delay once a Looked After Child returns, parents, all relevant agencies and others who were informed of the child's absence should be advised of the child's return. For a Looked After Child it should usually be the responsibility of the HSC Trust to notify parents. Only in very exceptional circumstances, such as where the child makes an allegation against their parent/guardian, or a member of care staff, should the individual not be informed immediately of their whereabouts.

It is the responsibility of the HSC Trust to make arrangements for transporting a child to his/her placement. The child should, where appropriate, be taken directly to his/her placement and not to a police

station, unless any information suggests that a direct return to the placement is not in the child's interests or a crime is suspected.

The Police do not automatically have power to detain a child unless the following apply:

- The child is in breach of bail conditions imposed by a court;
- The PSNI has grounds for the use of Police Protection under Article 65 of the Children Order;
- Disclosure of a criminal offence.

Recovery Orders under Article 69 of the Children Order can be applied for in respect of a child who is the subject of an Emergency Protection Order, in Police Protection, or the subject of a Care Order. Also Article 68 of the Children (NI) Order 1995 states it is an offence if a person knowingly and without lawful authority or reasonable excuse, takes a child away from the responsible person; keeps such a child away from the responsible person; or induces, assists or incites such a child to run away or stay away from the responsible person.

Safe and Well Checks

The role of the Police in missing persons investigations is to protect life and deal with any offences that come to light. ACPO Interim Guidance in respect of missing persons 2013, states that *"there is a responsibility on the police to ensure that the person is safe and well and has the opportunity to disclose any relevant issues. This may be conducted by Police or other professionals, but the police must be confident that there is nothing untoward that has been missed."*

There is a responsibility on the Police to ensure that the child is safe and well as soon as possible after a child reported missing has been found. The purpose is to check for any indications that the child has suffered harm, where and with whom they have been and to give them an opportunity to disclose any offending by or against them.

This may be conducted by the Police or by other professionals, but the Police must be confident that there is nothing untoward that has been missed. It is common for missing persons, especially children, to be unwilling to engage in this process. If this is the case it

is important to record the child's demeanour, their physical state and any factors that may be relevant later as part of the investigation.

Police will conduct safe and well checks in the following circumstances:

1. Looked After Children when the care professional or the child has alleged that the child has been the victim of a crime immediately before or during the time they went missing;
2. The Public Protection CSE Officer will monitor and review children who have been identified as being high risk of CSE and ensure regular contact with those children and Social Services;
3. Any persons where information has been received that they have been the victim of a crime immediately before or during the period they were missing.

It is recognised that Social Workers are professionally trained in respect of looking after children in care and that they are best suited to engage with the children when they return to home. Any information gleaned from the return interview must be shared with Police at the earliest opportunity.

Independent Return Interviews

When a Looked After Child or a child reported as missing from the community is found, they must be offered an independent return interview. An independent return interview provides the opportunity to uncover information that can help protect Looked After Child from the risk of going missing again and from risks they may have been exposed to while missing. The person conducting the interview should usually be independent of the Looked After Child placement and of the responsible HSC Trust. An exception maybe where the Looked After Child has a strong relationship with a carer, staff member, Social Worker or Police Officer and has expressed a preference to talk to them, rather than an independent person, about the reasons they went missing. (The components of an Independent Return Interview are set out in Appendix A).

The Looked After Child should also be offered the opportunity of speaking to an advocate.

Safe and well checks and independent return interviews provide an opportunity to inform care planning, for wider strategic planning and for professionals to take into account Looked After Child views.

Children's home staff or carers should continue to offer warm and consistent care when the child returns, and running away should not be seen as a behaviour that needs to be punished. The need for safe and reliable care may be particularly significant for a Looked After Child who faces pressures to run away from their placement as a result of circumstances beyond the control of their carers.

Data on Looked After Children who go Missing or are Away from Placement without Authorisation

Looked After Children who go missing, or who are away from their placement without authorisation, can be at increased risk of sexual or other forms of exploitation or of involvement in drugs, criminal activity or trafficking. Particular attention should be paid to repeat episodes. Each episode should trigger a review of the risk management and care planning arrangements for the Looked After Child concerned to respond to changing risks and consider new preventative measures.

Data on all episodes should be analysed regularly through the joint working arrangements in order to map problems and patterns, and to develop prevention and intervention strategies. It will be important to consider each child/young person(s) situation as children who are out of the home with permission could also be potentially subjected to risk including the risk of sexual exploitation.

Independent Return Interviews

When a child is found, they must be offered an independent return interview. Independent return interviews provide an opportunity to uncover information that can help protect children from the risk of going missing again, from risks they may have been exposed to while missing or from risk factors in their home.

The interview should be carried out within 72 hours of the child returning to their home or care setting. This should be an in-depth interview and is normally best carried out by an independent person (ie, someone not involved in caring for the child) who is trained to carry out these interviews and is able to follow-up any actions that emerge. Children sometimes need to build up trust with a person before they will discuss in depth the reasons why they ran away. The independent person could be a social worker not directly involved in the residential home but who has case responsibility for the young person.

The interview and actions that follow from it should:

- identify and deal with any harm the child has suffered – including harm that might not have already been disclosed as part of the ‘safe and well check’ – either before they ran away or whilst missing;
- understand and try to address the reasons why the child ran away;
- help the child feel safe and understand that they have options to prevent repeat instances of them running away;
- provide them with information on how to stay safe if they choose to run away again, including helpline numbers.

The interview should be held in a neutral place where the child feels safe. The interview provides an opportunity hear from the child about why they went missing and to understand the risks and issues faced by the child while missing. This could include exploring issues where a child:

- has been reported missing on two or more occasions;
- is frequently away from placement (or their home) without authorisation;
- has been hurt or harmed while they have been missing;
- is at known or suspected risk of sexual exploitation or trafficking;

- is at known or suspected risk of involvement in criminal activity or drugs;
- has contact with people posing risk to children; and/or
- has been engaged (or is believed to have engaged) in criminal activities while missing.

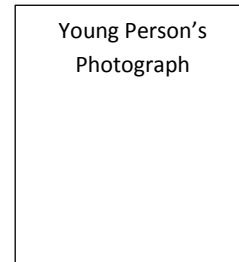
The assessment of whether a child might run away again should be based on information about:

- their individual circumstances, including family circumstances;
- their motivation for running away;
- their potential destinations and associates;
- their recent pattern of absences;
- the circumstances in which the child was found or returned; and
- their individual characteristics and risk factors such as whether a child has learning difficulties, mental health issues, depression and other vulnerabilities.

Following the safe and well check and independent return interview, Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCTs) Children's Services, Police and voluntary services should work together:

- to build up a comprehensive picture of why the child went missing;
- to understand what happened while they were missing;
- to understand who they were with when they were missing and where they were found; and
- what support they require upon returning to home or their care placement in accordance with the 'Working Together' guidance.

Young Person Profile Part A



(Completed at admission and kept under review)

Date of Photograph _____

Young Person's Details

Last name: _____ First Name: _____

D.O.B.: ____ / ____ / ____ Gender: M F

Current Address: _____

Postcode Tel No: _____

Family Address: _____

Postcode Tel No: _____

Other Relevant: _____

Postcode Tel No: _____

Other Names (maiden name, alias, nickname – nickname in First name field)

Last name: _____ First Name: _____

Last name: _____ First Name: _____

Employment Details – include work full and part-time and school

Occupation/Education: _____

Employer/School: _____ Tel No: _____

Occupation: _____

Employer/School: _____ Tel No: _____

Descriptive Details

If no photograph, can one be obtained? Yes/No Date of photograph obtained ____ / ____ / ____

Ethnic Appearance: _____ Accent: _____ Religion _____

Weight: _____ Build: _____ Weight: _____

Hair Colour: _____ Complexion _____

Hair Length: _____ Hair Style: _____ Parting: _____

Facial hair

Moustache: Full Beard: Goatee: Stubble: Other: _____

Eyes

Colour: _____ Glasses/Lens: _____

Description of Glasses: _____

Teeth

Description of Teeth: _____

Health

Medical Condition:

Allergy HIV Hepatitis Epilepsy

Cardiac Mental Diabetes Asthma
Medication: _____

Addiction (eg alcohol/drugs/solvent misuse):

Risk to person or others (detail):

Distinctive Features (tattoos, scars, marks, speech impediments, if piercing state how many eg 3 right ear and type)

Type: _____

Description (to include locality on person's body):

Identifiable Jewellery (other than pierced ears which are dealt with under distinctive features. Ring fingers are 1-4 with wedding finger no. 3. Bracelet is wrist or ankle, and watch strap should state what type, leather, metal etc)

Clip-on Earrings Necklace Ring Where Worn: L R Finger

Bracelets: Where: _____ Watch: _____ Make: _____

Colour: _____ Other Description: _____

Permission and Orders

Does Trust/Parent give permission for press release/appeal? Yes/No

Has UE/SAI notification been completed? Yes/No

UE/SAI reference number: _____

Date: ____ / ____ / ____

EPO Interim Care Order Care Order

Probation Service Care Order Other

Describe: _____

Dates of Order: _____

The Trust will furnish PSNI with all relevant details/information of actions taken including phone calls, text messages, and physical checks made, copy of court order, etc.

Young Person Profile Part B

(To be completed following each incident of disappearance as per procedure)

Details of disappearance

Risk Factors (amber, red) with details:

Contact Details of People Contacted (eg primary carers and others)

Relationship: _____ Name: _____ DOB/Age _____

Address: _____

Tel No: _____

Informed of disappearance Yes No Primary Contact re: investigation

Relationship: _____ Name: _____ DOB/Age _____

Address: _____

Tel No: _____

Informed of disappearance Yes No Primary Contact re: investigation

Relationship: _____ Name: _____ DOB/Age _____

Address: _____

Tel No: _____

Informed of disappearance Yes No Primary Contact re: investigation

Placement Circumstances prior to disappearance (Detailed description of circumstances, reason for disappearance, drugs use both legal and illegal. Association with persons of perceived high risk etc)

Place last seen:

Date: ___ / ___ / ___ Time _____ am/pm

By Whom: Last name: _____ First name: _____

Position: _____

Address: _____

Postcode

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 Tel No: _____

Clothing Worn when last seen (example: coat, tie, skirt, jeans, denim, silk, woollen, floral, paisley, nike, adidas, 36inch, medium, size 14)

Type: _____ Colour: _____ Material: _____

Pattern: _____ Brand Name: _____

Type: _____ Colour: _____ Material: _____

Pattern: _____ Brand Name: _____

Type: _____ Colour: _____ Material: _____

Pattern: _____ Brand Name: _____

Internet/chat room user? Yes No

Involved in crime prior to disappearance: Yes No

Suspicion of abduction: Yes No Details (type/describe) _____

Sports Bag Rucksack Other

Previous Missing: Previous Absconder: Reported to PSNI:

ISIC URN: (police to provide)

Mobile Phone No: _____

Offensive Weapon (knife/other): _____

Destination/Route:

Mode of Transport Foot Car Bus Train Taxi

Other

Vehicle Description: VRN: _____ Make: _____

Colour: _____

Details of person accompanying absconder/missing person (if applicable):

Last name: _____ First name: _____

D.O.B.: ____ / ____ / ____


Address: _____



Postcode


Tel No: _____


Primary Contact for Investigation is the Team Manager (9am – 5pm), or the Shift Co-ordinator in the Unit, the foster carer, social worker or out of hours service as appropriate.

Appendix C

Belfast HSC Trust			
Telephone (for referral)	028 90507000		
Areas	Greater Belfast area		
Further Contact Details (for on-going professional liaison)	<p>Greater Belfast Gateway Team</p> <p>414 Ormeau road</p> <p>Belfast, BT7 3HY</p>		
			
Website	http://www.belfasttrust.hscni.net/		
South Eastern HSC Trust			
Telephone (for referral)	03001000300		
Areas	Lisburn, Dunmurry, Moira, Hillsborough, Bangor, Newtownards, Ards Peninsula, Comber, Downpatrick, Newcastle and Ballynahinch		
Further Contact Details (for on-going professional liaison)	<p>Greater Lisburn Gateway Team</p> <p>Stewartstown Road Health Centre</p>	<p>North Down Gateway Team</p> <p>James Street</p> <p>Newtownards, BT23 4EP</p>	<p>Down Gateway Team</p> <p>Children's Services</p> <p>81 Market Street</p> <p>Downpatrick, BT30 6LZ</p>

 <p>Gateway Service for Children's Social Work 0300 1000 300</p>	<p>212 Stewartstown Road Dunmurry Belfast, BT17 0FG Tel: 028 90602705 Fax: 028 90629827</p>	<p>Tel: 028 91818518 Fax: 028 90564830</p>	<p>Tel: 028 44613511 Fax: 028 44615734</p>
<p>Website</p>	<p>http://www.setrust.hscni.net/</p>		
<p>Northern HSC Trust</p>			
<p>Telephone (for referral)</p>	<p>03001234333</p>		
<p>Areas</p>	<p>Antrim, Carrickfergus, Newtownabbey, Larne, Ballymena, Cookstown, Magherafelt, Ballycastle, Ballymoney, Portrush and Coleraine</p>		
<p>Further Contact Details (for on-going professional liaison)</p>  <p>Gateway Services for Children's Social Work 0300 1234 333</p>	<p>Central Gateway Team Unit 5A, Toome Business Park Hillhead Road Toomebridge, BT41 3SF Tel: 028 7965 1020 Fax: 028 7965 1036</p>	<p>South Eastern Gateway Team The Beeches 76 Avondale Drive Ballyclare, BT39 9DB Tel: 028 93340165 Fax: 028 9334 2531</p>	<p>Northern Gateway Team Coleraine Child Care Team 7A Castlerock Road Coleraine, BT51 3HP Tel: 028 7032 5462 Fax: 028 7035 7614</p>

Website	http://www.northerntrust.hscni.net/		
Southern HSC Trust			
Telephone (for referral)	08007837745		
Areas	Craigavon, Banbridge, Dromore, Lurgan, Portadown, Gilford, Armagh, Coalisland, Dungannon, Fivemiletown, Markethill, Moy, Tandragee, Ballygawley, Newry City, Bessbrook, Annalong, Rathfriland, Warrenpoint, Crossmaglen, Kilkeel, Newtownhamilton		
Further Contact Details (for on-going professional liaison)	 <p>Craigavon/Banbridge Gateway Team</p> <p>Brownlow H&SS Centre 1 Legahory Centre Craigavon , BT65 5BE Tel: 028 38343011 Fax: 028 38324366</p>	<p>Newry/Mourne Gateway Team</p> <p>Dromalane House Dromalane Road Newry, BT35 8AP Tel: 028 30825000 Option 1 Fax: 028 30825016</p>	<p>Armagh /Dungannon Gateway Team</p> <p>E Floor South Tyrone Hospital Carland Road Dungannon, BT71 4AU Tel: 028 87713506 Fax: 028 87713671</p>
Website	http://www.southerntrust.hscni.net/		

Western HSC Trust			
Telephone (for referral)	028 71314090		
Areas	Derry, Limavady, Strabane, Omagh and Enniskillen		
Further Contact Details (for on-going professional liaison) 	Derry Gateway Team Whitehill, 106 Irish Street Derry, BT47 2ND Tel: 028 71314090 Fax: 028 71314091	Omagh Gateway Team Tyrone and Fermanagh Hospital 1 Donaghane Road Omagh, BT79 ONS Tel: 028 66344103 Fax: n/a	Enniskillen Gateway Team 2 Coleshill Road Enniskillen BT747HG Tel: 028 66344103 Fax: n/a
Website	http://www.westertrust.hscni.net/		
Regional Emergency Social Work Service (RESWS)			
Regional Emergency Social Work Service (RESWS) Out of Hours Emergency Service –	5:00 pm – 9:00 am weekdays 24 hours at weekends and bank holidays 028 95 04999		

Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI)	
Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI)	<p>In an emergency Police can be contacted by telephoning 999.</p> <p>The PSNI can also be contacted in a non-emergency situation by telephoning 101. Both numbers available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.</p>
Other Useful Numbers	
NWG	<p>Tel. 01332 585371</p> <p>NWG Network Headquarters Suite 18, Parker House, Mansfield Road. Derby. DE21 4SZ</p>
NSPCC Helpline	<p>Tel. 0800 1111</p> <p>ChildLine is our free 24/7, confidential helpline for children and young people. Whenever children need us, ChildLine is there to help – by phone, email or live chat.</p>
Barnardo's Safe Choices	<p>Tel. 028 90 658 511</p> <p>230b Belmont Road Belfast BT4 2AW</p>

VOYPIC Advocacy Service	Ballymena Tel. 028 2563 2641 Belfast Tel. 028 9024 4888 Derry/Londonderry Tel. 028 7137 8980 Lurgan Tel. 028 3831 3380
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Appendix D

Missing Child/Police Involvement in Residential Care Monitoring Form

Placement type: Residential Foster Care

Details of Incident:

Length of absence: 0 - 12 hours 12 - 24
24 - 48 hours 48 +

Actions taken to Manage/Resolve the situation:

Did the child need to be interviewed by the police as:

(a) Being involved in a crime? (b) A victim of crime?

Outcome of Intervention: (Please include examples of good practice/issues identified and areas of concern)

Signatures:

Foster Carer/Shift Co-ordinator: _____ Date: _____

PSNI Officer: _____ Date: _____

To be completed by the carer/shift co-ordinator