

Children Missing from Home or Care 2015

1. Introduction

Croydon's Procedure for Safeguarding Children Missing from Care and Home is created to provide a multi-agency response to children and young people who go missing from home or care. This local protocol should be used in conjunction with the London Child Protection Procedures for Safeguarding Children Missing from Home and Care, Oct. 2015. This joint procedure applies to all children and young people under 18 who go missing or have episodes of absence from care or home.

2. Definitions

Missing- a child or young person who is away from their home or placement and their whereabouts are unknown.

Unauthorised Absence- a child or young person who is not where they are expected or required to be and their whereabouts are known or could be established.

This category is critical to the clarification of roles of the Police and Children's Social Care. Some children absent themselves from home or care for a short period and then return, often their whereabouts are known or may be quickly established through contact with family or friends or are unknown but the children are not considered at risk. Sometimes children stay out longer than agreed as a boundary testing activity which is well within the range of normal teenage behaviour. These children have taken 'unauthorised absence', and would not usually come within the definition of 'missing' for this Procedure.

If a child's whereabouts are known then they cannot be 'missing'.

However, if they are known to be staying somewhere where they are in danger and it is not possible for the carer/ person with parental responsibility to remove the child or young person, then it may still be necessary to involve Police and partners in safeguarding them.

Children accommodated by the local authority with an unauthorised absence longer than 24 hours will be reported as missing.

3. Responding to Unauthorised Absences of Children and Young People In Care

It is expected that foster carers, carers and residential staff must do all that a reasonable parent would do to locate and ensure the safe return of the child/ young person. They should telephone the child, their friends or relatives to ascertain the child/ young person's location, collect the child/ young person or negotiate some alternative arrangements. Before making these arrangements, the carer may wish to discuss the situation with the young person's social worker/ Emergency Duty Team (EDT).

If the carer believes the child/ young person is at risk, or the carer feels that they are unable to make an informed judgment in relation to this (for example if the child is new to the placement, or if the staff on duty do not know the child well enough) they must inform the child's social worker/ team leader/ EDT immediately.

If it is thought that there are specific issues of safety or public order difficulties involved in returning the child, then action should be agreed between the police, the residential unit staff/ foster carer and the social worker/EDT. If the local authority knows, or believes it knows, the child's location and there are difficulties or dangers involved in returning the child, a Recovery Order should be actively sought.

4. Children Who Go Missing From Home

It should always be remembered that children missing from home face similar risks to those faced by children missing from care and local agencies should treat all instances where children are missing, seriously. Children living in the community are often well known to Accident & Emergency Services, Schools and other Education Establishments or the Youth Service.

5. High risk children/young people

The following children/ young people should automatically be considered as high risk and reported immediately to the police by the foster carer/ residential staff. The carer/ residential staff should then immediately inform the child's social worker / EDT.

The high risk groups are:

- Any child/ young person who presents an immediate risk to themselves or to other people
- Any child who is 12 years old or younger whose whereabouts are unknown
- Any child deemed vulnerable due to learning &/ or physical disabilities, mental, emotional or physical health problems
- Any child/ young person who is subject to a Child Protection or Sexual Exploitation Plan
- Any child/ young person who is abducted from care
- Any young person who is subject to a curfew and goes missing beyond the end of their curfew

The HOS must be notified immediately if a high risk child is missing and he or she will inform the Director and Executive Director.

6. Children subject to a Child Protection Plan who go Missing

Children who have a Child Protection Plan or who are subject to a Section 47 enquiry need additional action to that required for other children. This includes:

- Informing the Local Authority Custodian of the Child Protection Register or equivalent, and the local health provider and the Designated Nurse.
- Ensuring that a Strategy Meeting is arranged – as soon as practicable and in any event within 3 days, the social worker should arrange a strategy meeting if the child is **still** missing. Representatives from both the Police Missing Persons Unit and Child Abuse Investigation Team and education and health should attend the strategy meeting, as well as other practitioners involved with the child. (See Sections 5, Children in Specific Circumstances to 8, Child Protection Conferences of the London Child Protection Procedures)

- Where a child with a Protection Plan has gone missing with/without their family, Children's Social Services must implement the London Notification of Missing Children/Persons Procedure sending out a national alert to all other local authorities.

These meetings will be chaired by the allocated Child Protection Conference Chair.

7. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

For unaccompanied asylum seeking children the following additional steps should be undertaken:

- The UK Borders Agency Local Immigration Team should also be notified within 24 hours of the child being considered missing from care. Regular contact should be maintained to ensure that the local authority is informed if the child has been detained or returned to their country of origin by the UKBA.
- If the child has a legal representative, they should also be notified.
- If and when the child returns, the above agencies should be informed.

8. Notifying the Police

The Police should be notified by telephone as soon as possible. The social worker should call 101 and make an official report of the missing status..

The Police will conduct an investigation into all reports of 'missing' children.

The need to inform senior managers of what has happened must not be allowed to delay action to locate and safeguard the child.

9. Working with the Police

Police are the lead agency for the investigation of missing children. Children's Social Care is responsible for the planning and safeguarding of all children who are known to them.

If the child is a Looked After Child then Children's Social Care are responsible for children in their care at all times and this responsibility is not absolved when a child is reported missing to the Police.

10. Information to be Made Available

When reporting a missing child to Police (or other agencies, as appropriate), the person making the referral should provide the minimum information as follows;

- A description of the child (name, date of birth, physical appearance). Recent photograph, if possible
- When the child was last seen and with whom
- Family addresses

- Known acquaintances
- The basis of the risk assessment and classification of High Risk
- The name and address of the child's GP and Dentist
- Where there are concerns around possible sexual exploitation

11. Missing Child Strategy Meetings

Children's Social Care must convene a face to face Strategy Meeting as soon as possible and within no more than three working days of the missing event, involving representatives from all relevant agencies including the Police Missing Persons Unit and Child Abuse Investigation Team. Strategy meetings will continue fortnightly until the young person is found. These meetings are chaired by the designated IRO or Child Protection Conference Chair. Missing strategy meetings for Child in Need will be chaired by the Unit Manager.

The Strategy Meeting must consider the following:

- Making further attempts to contact the child/young person's known relatives, friends, regular places of visit etc. Consideration should be given to writing to relatives and friends regarding the Department's concerns and the expectation that the relatives/friends will inform the Department should they obtain any relevant information.
- Writing to other local authorities and local agencies with the information about the missing child/young person. Partner agencies should receive information from each other on the basis of their need to know and in order to take action to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child.
- Use of publicity. The Director when informed a high risk child is missing will as soon as possible inform the Executive Director of what action is being taken to recover the child and which services/agencies are involved in this. The Director and Executive Director should consider whether to ask the media to assist in the recovery of the child in consultation with the Police. The child's parents must be informed prior to a press release being made and consent should be received from them and/or those with parental responsibility. Legal Services should be consulted if there are any issues regarding obtaining consent.
- Contacting the Missing Person's Helpline. This group provides a specialist service to Children's Social Services when any of their looked after children go missing, including asylum seeking children. Seeking a Recovery Order and deciding how the order should be exercised i.e. should there be a joint visit with police and Social Care staff.
- Notifying national authorities and agencies.
- Appropriate legal interventions if there is any suspicion that the child may have been removed from UK jurisdiction.

The decisions of the strategy meeting and the timescales must be clearly recorded, in CRS within 10 working days.

12. Missing Episodes lasting 3 months and longer

If the child/young person continues to be missing after three months, the relevant Head of Service will chair the missing strategy on a fortnightly basis to review all the actions taken so

far and consider what further action to be taken, until the child/young person is recovered. Should a young person remain missing 6 months or longer or have there is clear evidence that the young person has expressed their wish to cease their accommodation status the Ending Sec. 20 Accommodation guidance should be considered. (Appendix 2)

13. Croydon Missing Children's Panel

All children and young people reported missing will be reviewed at the Croydon Missing Children's Panel which sits on a monthly basis.

14. Information Sharing

For agencies to assess risk, identify and locate missing children/young people and undertake effective debrief, the expectation is the Police, Education and Children's Services will share all relevant information about the missing child. Information shared between agencies should include:

- Name, gender and date of birth;
- Ethnicity, first language and any additional communication needs;
- Description of individual, including clothing and any significant marks;
- Street name or alias;
- A recent photo;
- Family address/es;
- Address/es of known friends or acquaintances;
- Any previous episode/s of being missing;
- Name and address of child/young person's GP and dentist;
- Legal status;
- Any previous links with street based agencies;
- Efforts made already to locate the child/young person;
- Any circumstances thought to increase risk;
- Most recent completed risk assessment

15. Planning for when the Child is Located and their Return

If a child is 'missing' the Police and parents, Social Worker, Residential Unit Staff/Foster Carer and Police should commence contingency planning for when the child is located. Plans should include:

- Will the child return to the placement/home address or are they safe in the location where they are found?
- If the child is to return, how will s/he be conveyed to their placement/home address?
- Do the Police wish to interview the child where they are located or after they have returned their placement/home address?
- Confirming who will talk to the child when s/he is located/returned.

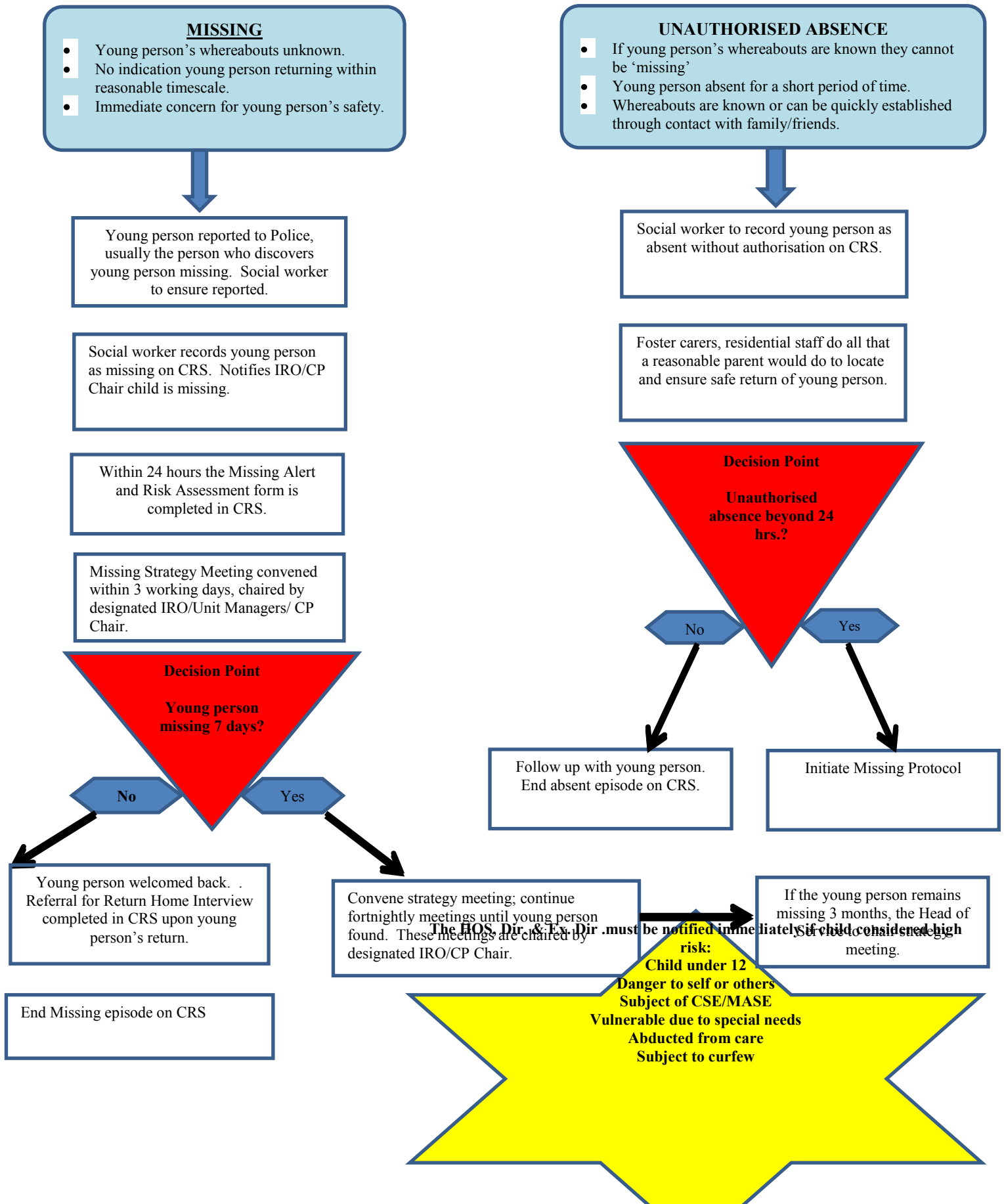
Normally the Residential Unit Staff/Foster Carer or Social Worker/Emergency Duty Team (out of hours) will make arrangements for the transportation of a child to his/her placement/home address.

15. Return Home Interviews

All missing children who have returned or been found should be offered a return home interview with an independent person to be conducted within 72 hours of return. The purpose of this interview is to ascertain:

- Identify and deal with any harm the child has incurred (his/her medical condition should be discussed immediately and any need for medical attention assessed)
- Understand and address the reasons the child ran away (the child's living arrangements/placement might need to be reviewed, an Early Help assessment may need to be completed)
- Where the child/young person was during the missing/absent period
- Any concerns that exist regarding the activity or treatment of the child or young person whilst missing/absent
- What may need to change to reduce the likelihood of further episodes
- Potential support to meet the needs of the young person

Appendix 1- Missing from Care Procedure Flowchart



Recording a Missing Child or Unauthorised Absence

1. From the Demographics screen, click **Add Missing Child Record** from the Personal tab

The screenshot shows the 'Basic Demographics' screen for a child named 'Child Dummy Test' (7 years old, Ref: 2500215). The 'Personal' tab is selected. The 'Important Information' section is highlighted in yellow and contains a blue star icon and the text 'No Category of Need defined'. Below this, the 'Add Missing Child Record' link is circled in red.

Personal	Personal Details	Address	Main Carer(s)/Cares For
Personal Additional Identity Photos Risks Parental Factors	Case Number: 2500215 Full Name: Miss Child Dummy Test Gender: Female Actual DOB: 12-Oct-2007 Age: 7 years	Primary Address: 1 NORTHWAY ROAD, CROYDON, Surrey CR0 6JG Oct 2012 to present Address History / Update Addresses	No Main Carer(s) or cared children defined

2. The **Start Date** will automatically default to today's date but can be amended if required
3. Specify the **Location Missing from e.g. (Home, School, Placement)** and **Location (area) when gone missing**
4. Enter the **Missing Status** from the drop down selection
5. Enter the remaining details including what to do and who to contact
6. Click **Create**

The screenshot shows the 'Create a new Missing Person' form. The 'Missing Person Dates' section has 'Started' set to '28-Nov-2014'. The 'Missing Person Location' section has 'Location missing from' and 'Location when gone missing' circled in red. The 'Missing Person Details' section has 'Missing Status' circled in red.

Create Cancel - Create a new Missing Person

New Missing Person: Missing from 28-Nov-2014

Missing Person Dates

Started: 28-Nov-2014
Time gone missing: [dropdown]
Ended: [calendar icon]
Time found: [dropdown]

Missing Person Location

Location missing from: [text box]
Location when gone missing: [text box]
Location found: [text box]

Missing Person Details

Missing Status: [dropdown]
Local Authority: [dropdown]
Description: [text box]

The Missing Child status will be highlighted in the Important Information section of the personal tab.

Child: **Child Dummy Test** 7 years (Ref: 2500215) CIN R Basic Demographics

2 SOCIAL WORKERS MUST BE PRESENT WHEN UNDERTAKING VISITS

- Personal**
 - Personal Details

Case Number	2500215
Full Name	Miss Child Dummy Test
Gender	Female
Actual DOB	12-Oct-2007
Age	7 years
 - Address

Primary Address **1 NORTHWAY ROAD, CROYDON, Surrey CR0 6JG**

Oct 2012 to present

Address History / Update Addresses
 - Telephones

Add Contact Number
 - Main Carer(s)/Cares For

No Main Carer(s) or cared children defined
 - Important Information
 - No Category of Need defined
 - This child is recorded Missing**

Where a child remains missing and a Strategy meeting is indicated

Within 24 hours of recording a missing episode the Social Worker to complete a **Croydon Missing Alert and Risk Assessment**. You can start this assessment from the Forms Tab.

Parental Factors
Relationships
Involvements
CIN
CP
CLA
Adoption
Costs
History
Time Line
Chronology
Forms
Documents
Case Notes
Restricted Access
Audit
CP-IS Audit

● **Completed Forms**

Form Date	Form Type	User
	Age Assessment	
	Applicant's Self Assessment	
	Calleydown Summary of Progress Report	
	Consent For Looked After Children Health Assessment	
	Consent to Section 20 Accommodation & Consent to medical Treatment	
	Croydon Missing Alert & Risk Assessment	
	Croydon Missing Strategy meeting minutes	
	Dog Questionnaire	
	Friends or Family Placement Form	
	LAC Consent form	
	Legal Planning meeting Record	
	MASH Intelligence Form	
	MASH Outcome form	
	Placement Information record	
	Quality Audit: Exemplar F&S	
	Quality Audit: Exemplar JS	
	Questionnaire for Referees	
	Referral to EHM	
	Request for legal Planning Meeting	
	SQA Escalation & Resolution Alert Form	

Start ICS Transfer Form

Start

Once the form is finalised an alert will automatically be sent to the QA Missing Tray for their information.

When a Missing strategy meeting is held the minute taker creates a **Croydon Missing Strategy meeting** from the forms tab.

Form Date	Form Type	User
22 Dec 2014 08:22	Croydon Missing Alert & Risk Assessment	Mr STEVE HA
	Age Assessment	
	Applicant's Self Assessment	
	Calleydown Summary of Progress Report	
	Consent For Looked After Children Health Assessment	
	Consent to Section 20 Accommodation & Consent to medical Treatment	
	Croydon Missing Alert & Risk Assessment	
	Croydon Missing Strategy meeting minutes	
	Dog Questionnaire	
	Friends or Family Placement Form	
	LAC Consent form	
	Legal Planning meeting Record	
	MASH Intelligence Form	
	MASH Outcome form	
	Placement Information record	
	Quality Audit Exemplar F&S	
	Quality Audit Exemplar JS	
	Questionnaire for Referees	
	Referral to EHM	
	Request for legal Planning Maating	
	SQA Escalation & Resolution Alert Form	

The form is then reassigned to the Chair to finalise the minutes.

Further strategy meetings can be created as required.

Updating a missing child record to say they have now returned or been found

1-From the demographics page **click** on the **child/young person is recorded as missing** hyperlink

Child: Child Dummy Test 7 years (Ref: 2500215)
Basic Demographics

⚠️ 2 SOCIAL WORKERS MUST BE PRESENT WHEN UNDERTAKING VISITS

Personal Personal Additional Identity Photos Risks Parental Factors	Personal Details Case Number: 2500215 Full Name: Miss Child Dummy Test Gender: Female Actual DOB: 12-Oct-2007 Age: 7 years	Address Primary Address: 1 NORTHWAY ROAD, CROYDON, Surrey CR0 6JG Oct 2012 to present Address History / Update Addresses	Main Carer(s)/Cares For No Main Carer(s) or cared children defined
			Important Information ⚡ No Category of Need defined ⚡ This child is recorded Missing

Then click on **update missing person** if you just want to amend the missing record or **Child found if** they have now returned

● Actions

- ▶ Update Missing Person Record
- ▶ Child Found
- ▶ Change Missing Status

If a YP has returned you need to enter the **returned date** in the **ended field** and also update the **time returned, location found** and change the missing status to **found**.

You will also need to complete the **Outcome** section and **Risks section**.

Update Missing Person: Missing from 28-Nov-2014

● **Missing Person Dates**

Started 28-Nov-2014
Time gone missing
Ended
Time found

● **Missing Person Location**

Location found

● **Missing Person Details**

Missing Status Found

Description

● **Outcomes**

Outcomes

● **Risks**

Risk Factor (contact with person/s posing risk)

Engaged in criminal activities Yes No
Been hurt or harmed Yes No
Mental Health Issues Yes No
Risk of Sexual Exploitation Yes No
Risk Assessment Completed
Return Interview Completed

Upon the young person's return the Social Worker will completed the **Referral for a Return Home Interview**. This referral can be found under the forms tab.

-
- Age Assessment
 - Applicant's Self Assessment
 - Calleydown Summary of Progress Report
 - Consent For Looked After Children Health Assessment
 - Consent to Section 20 Accommodation & Consent to medical Treatment
 - Croydon Missing Alert & Risk Assessment
 - Croydon Missing Return interview Form**
 - Croydon Missing Strategy meeting minutes
 - Dog Questionnaire
 - Friends or Family Placement Form
 - LAC Consent form
 - Legal Planning meeting Record
 - MASH Intelligence Form
 - MASH Outcome form
 - Placement Information record
 - Quality Audit Exemplar F&S
 - Quality Audit Exemplar JS
 - Questionnaire for Referees
 - Referral to EHM
 - Request for legal Planning Maating
 - SQA Escalation & Resolution Alert Form

Once this has been completed and finalised an alert will be sent to the Missing Co-ordinator.

Viewing all records of when a child has gone missing

1-On the **demographics screen** if you **click** on the **Additional tab** at the bottom of the page it will list all the records of when that child has gone missing previously.

Additional

- Identity
- Photos
- Risks
- Parental Factors
- Relationships
- Involvements
- CIN
- CP
- CLA
- Adoption
- Costs
- History
- Time Line
- Chronology
- Forms
- Documents
- Case Notes
- Restricted Access
- Audit

Is on a Disability Register?

● **Disabilities**
No Disabilities Recorded
[▶ Add a Disability](#)

● **Categories of Need**

Started On	Ended On	Category of Need
21-May-2014	20-May-2014	N2 - Child's Disability
21-May-2014	19-Nov-2014	N1 - Abuse or Neglect
24-Jan-2014	20-May-2014	N1 - Abuse or Neglect
10-Dec-2013	14-Jan-2014	N1 - Abuse or Neglect

[▶ Add a Category of Need record](#)

● **Legal Statuses**
No Legal Statuses Recorded
[▶ Add Legal Status](#)

● **Missing Person records**

Started	Ended	Missing Status
28-Nov-2014	28-Nov-2014	Found

[▶ Add Missing Child Record](#)

APPENDIX 2: Ceasing Sec.20 Accommodation Guidance

This guidance supplements the Missing Protocol and is for those rare cases where de-accommodating a child under Sec. 20 who is missing or absent from placement; or have clearly stated their intent to not utilise their placement is being considered.

It should be noted that there is a difference between ending the placement and de-accommodating a child. Often a placement will have been closed as a result of the young person not using the placement, but the child maintains his or her LAC status and a new placement is sourced upon their return from missing episode.

Where a child or young person is de-accommodated, they are no longer looked after by the Local Authority. This guidance applies only to young people aged 16 and over who have been missing from care for 6 months or more or where there is clear evidence that the young person has expressed their wish to cease their accommodation.

After the missing strategy meeting where de-accommodation is recommended, the IRO will convene a LAC review within 10 working days to bring together all the relevant professionals and parents, whenever possible, to consider the recommendation and change in care plan. The minutes from the strategy meeting will be available for the review and the social worker should complete the pre-meeting report. The minutes from this review shall be completed within 10 working days and the case scheduled to be presented at the High Risk Panel, chaired by the Director.

The Director will need to be satisfied that all that should have been done has been done to locate the young person before a ratification of the recommendation to de-accommodate. If a young person is de-accommodated a National Notification will be sent out with information the young person is missing and if found remains an open case with Croydon Children Social Care.

If the young person is an UASC, notification will also be sent to the UK Borders Agency Local Immigration Team and the young person's legal representative.

In the event the child went missing before an initial LAC review, the case will be discussed with the QA Manager, LAC Lead and the Director before presentation to the High Risk Panel.

Should the IRO not agree that de-accommodation is in the best interest of the young person, the Director will write to the IRO stating his reasons and alerting them to their right to escalate the case further if they wish to do so.

APPENDIX 3: Helplines

Missing People

The charity provides 24/7 support to those who have run away, gone missing or been forced to leave. They are there to help talk things through, give confidential advice and pass a message home if a child / young person wishes for this.

The charity can also provide support and advice for the families of those who have gone missing. Missing individuals and their families can contact Missing People for free and confidential advice, support, help and options by calling or texting 116 000, or emailing 116000@missingpeople.org.uk

Missing People also provide a range of services for Police handling missing person investigations, including taking referrals for family support and making publicity appeals. They can send supportive text messages to missing children with the service TextSafe.

Contact Missing People for any of these above service by calling 116 000 or emailing 116000@missingpeople.org.uk.cjsm.net

Please see the Missing People website for more information www.missingpeople.org.uk

Childline

Childline is a free and confidential helpline providing support for children and young people run by the NSPCC.

Contact Childline by calling 0800 1111

Please see the Childline website for more information www.childline.org.uk

Child Exploitation & Online Protection Centre (CEOP)

CEOP works across the UK tackling child sex abuse and providing advice for parents, young people and children for keeping safe on line. They also provide advice to children and young people contemplating running away and help to locate missing children and young people by publicising them on the missingkids website www.missingkids.co.uk

Please see the CEOP website for further information www.ceop.police.uk

Get Connected

Get connected is a free, confidential helpline for any young people under 25 who need help but don't know where to turn.

Call for free on 0808 808 4994 (13.00-23.00 7 days a week), text 80849 or email via their website.

Please see the Get Connected website for further information www.getconnected.org.uk 20

FRANK

Frank is a confidential helpline for anyone in the UK concerned about drug use. Contact FRANK by calling 0800 776 00 or texting 82111 or visit their website from additional information www.talktofrank.com.