Corporate Parenting Committee
Date 25 July 2023

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ITEM 06

Derby City Council

Update Report on reducing missing episodes and vulnerabilities of Looked After Children in accordance with the Joint Missing Protocol.

Purpose

1.1 The Early Help Service holds the strategic responsibility within the council to manage and report the regular monitoring of all children and young people who go missing.

1.2 To ensure there is a comprehensive oversight of those most vulnerable young people who have missing episodes, the Early Help Service also report the Missing agenda to the Exploitation and Vulnerable Young Peoples Group which is a sub-group of the Derby and Derbyshire Children's Safeguarding Partnership.

1.3 This report gives an overview of the current performance and actions implemented to support improved outcomes for those Looked After children who go missing.

Recommendation(s)

2.1 To ensure Corporate Parenting Committee are kept abreast of developments, progress, and impact of the missing protocol on looked after children to date.

Reason(s)

3.1 To ensure Corporate Parenting Committee can comment on any developments and progress with regards to the missing protocol for looked after children to date.

Supporting information

4.1   The missing protocol in partnership with Derbyshire Childrens Service and Derbyshire Constabulary was updated in April 2023.

The purpose of the missing protocol is to ensure the adequate safeguarding of children and families normally resident in Derby and Derbyshire, or those using services in the area. It should be read and implemented by all practitioners and managers working with children or young people who are currently missing or are at risk of going missing.

The protocol has been developed in accordance with:
- *Statutory Guidance Children who Run Away or go Missing from Home or Care (2014)* which sets out the steps local authorities and their partners should take to prevent children from going missing and to protect them when they do go missing;
- *Interim Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons (2013); and*
- *College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice – Missing Person Investigations (7th January 2021)*

Progress of the Missing Protocol over the last 12 months

4.2   Strategic meetings have been maintained over the last twelve months, with these meetings taking place bi-quarterly and are used to drive the missing protocol.

The Missing Strategic meeting has a wide and diverse membership from both internal and external partners.

4.3   Since the last Corporate Parenting Committee meeting there has been significant progress which is noted below:

- Updated the missing protocol and relevant training materials to ensure that all Early Help and Social Care are implementing the correct procedures.
- Updated the missing pathway on the recorded systems which Childrens services use to ensure we are incorporating a strength-based model, placed based risk and disruption of missing episodes by the use of a disruption and safety action plan which is within the return interview and missing intervention planning meetings (3 or more missing episodes in 30 days) and other relevant meetings linked to looked after children.
- Updated training resources on best practice on completing a return interview should a young person be reported as missing, and this takes into consideration persistent missing children.
- A representative from Early Help with a missing resource attends Enhanced case planned meetings (these are in direct relation to Looked after children)
- Quarterly return interviews audits which demonstrate overall "good" findings in all key lines of enquiry.
- All information pertaining to changes in the missing Policing team has been shared with strategic and operational staff who have links with missing.
- New guidance for residential staff to complete return interviews and a process which embeds this to ensure young people can discuss their missing episodes with the person they identify as having the best relationship with has been created in partnership with the children in care teams and the DCC residential homes in what is referred to as "Exception" Guidance on Return Interviews for Derby City Council Residential Staff.
- Delivery of training and creating materials for residential staff to complete return interviews. Two sessions have been completed and a last one is scheduled at the end of July. Residential staff will not be able to complete return interviews unless they have completed this training.

- The use and referrals to youth alliance when young people are discussed at the operational monthly missing monitoring group If places/ hot sports have been identified to help reduce risks and vulnerabilities.
- Undertook a best practice session on missing children in care which focused on; how to support in reducing missing episodes exploring the use of analysis, safety, and disruption at a children in care teams development day.
- Creation of a missing safety planning tool to be used with young people. This has been piloted with Early Help Teams. Moving forward would like to take this to children in care council to review and gain young people's views and make appropriate changes. In the meantime, this will now be sent to the whole of Early Help and Social Care to be used as a prevention tool and will be on the missing training page as a resource.
- Creation of a Child at Risk of exploitation team (July 2023) formed of practitioners from the Early Help teams, who will undertake "mapping" of children at risk of exploitation which will have cross over with looked after children and missing episodes. Therefore, joining up gaps of information and being able to report through appropriate mechanisms any children where there are concerns including looked after children.

Looked After Children Missing Data:

4.4   Between July 2022 and June 2023 there have been 684 missing episodes for 89 young people who are looked after children. This is a significant increase from the same reporting period the year before where there was 525 missing episodes and a total of 69 young people. The increase of missing episodes is in line with national trends.

The below table demonstrated that males (aged between 13-17 years) have the highest number of individuals reported as missing compared to girls and transgender young people.

Gender	Individuals	Episodes
Male	48	336
Female	37	256
Transgender	4	92

Of the 684 missing episodes, the below graph demonstrates that 42 young people equates to total of 618 missing episodes where they are deemed persistently missing, with 3 or more missing episodes.
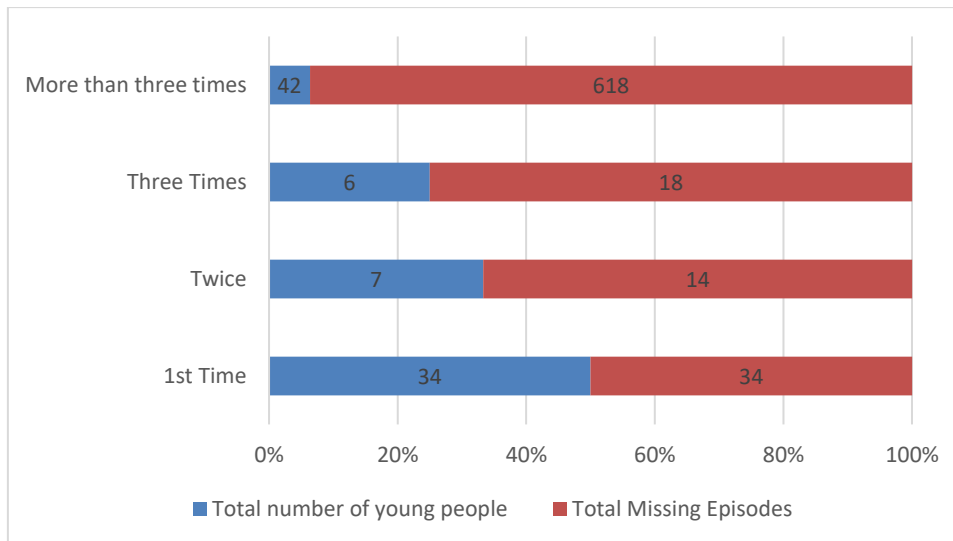
Of the 684 missing episodes, the below table demonstrates the statutory compliance on ensuring return interviews are completed:

Return Interview	Total Number
In timescales	420
Out of timescales	110
Voided	21
Incomplete	131

The missing performance and tracking co-ordinator is supporting individual social workers in completing the "Incomplete" return interviews. As often social workers are contacting a young person and recording this, but not using the correct recording process.

The department is aware of all the young people who go regular missing and interventions with the wider network of professionals is utilised within the action plans to try and reduce the missing episodes and therefore keep young people safe. The below table is the top 12 persistently missing looked after children, 4 out of the 12 reside in semi -independent living and 4 out of the 12 had multiple placements, based on there needs and has reduced their missing episodes.

Young Person	No of episodes	Placement type
1	54	Unregulated and Semi Independent
2	49	Residential and Placed Out of Area
3	43	Semi independent
4	38	Semi independent
5	32	Foster care
6	28	Placed Out of Area/Independent residential and semi-independent
7	27	Placed Out of Area
8	27	Derby City residential

9	22	Placed Out of Area
10	22	Foster Care/Placed out of Area
11	22	Semi independent
12	22	Semi Independent

Out of these twelve, 2 are now in secure accommodation, one has turned 18 years, four as stated changed placement type and this has significantly reduced missing episodes, four when they have stability and improved mental health there missing episodes reduce and one is still a persistent missing person; all professionals work together to ensure this young person is reported missing as a safety mechanism and there are interventions taking place which is aimed at keeping the young person safe.

Top Locations young people are being found or where it is suspected they have been due from information gathered from a multi-agency perspective:

A) Derbion
B) River Gardens
C) Bus stations
D) Parks which include Caxton Park, Stockbrook Park and Markeaton Park
E) Private addresses where it is thought house parties are taking place.

These locations are highlighted in the monthly missing monitoring meeting and raised at police led high risk exploitation and missing meetings and appropriate referrals and resources are utilised from the youth alliance, community safety partnership and local SNT to support in disrupting these areas, engaging young people in positive activities and making these areas safe for young people and the wider community (if they are deemed concerning).
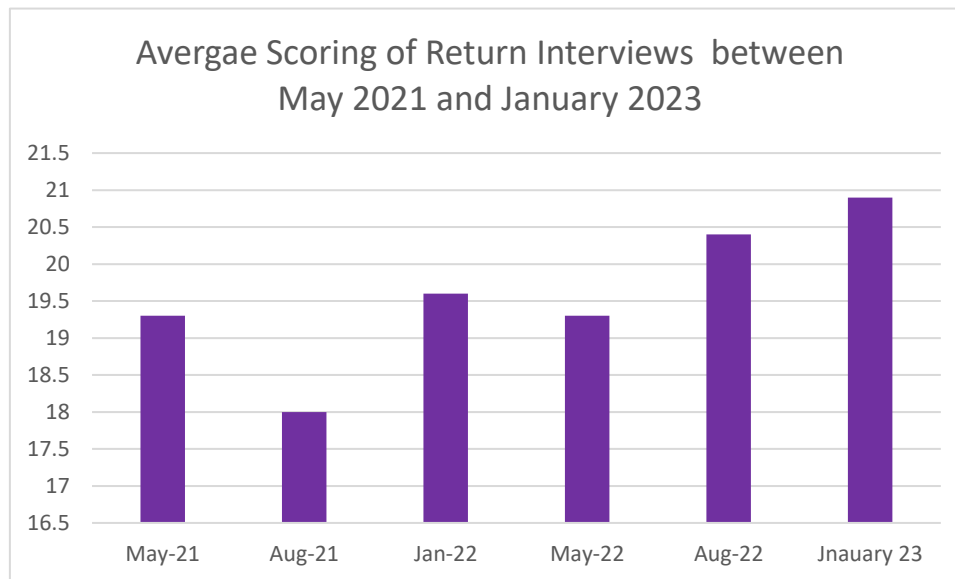
Audit Data

4.5   The table below shows the return interview audit from unknown children, Early Help Cases, Social Care Cases which incorporates Children in Need, Child Protection and Looked after Children.

	May 2022	August 2022	November 2022	February 2023
Appropriateness of contact/ Offering a Return Interview	2.9	3.1	2.9	3.0
Within statutory timescales to response to Missing Episode	2.4	2.6	2.8	2.7
CRE Risk analysis Completed	2.7	2.9	2.9	3.3
Factual and Circumstances Leading to the Missing Episode	2.7	3.0	2.8	2.9
Professional Analysis and Judgement	2.8	3.0	3.1	3.2
Action Plan	2.8	2.8	2.8	3.0
Management Authorisation	3.0	3.1	2.9	2.9
AVERAGE SCORING	**19.3**	**20.4**	**20.1**	**20.9**

Overall, the average scoring has improved in the last year and would be safely scored as "good" in overall quality and in particular key areas which would support implementing

disruption and intervention; Child at risk of exploitation risks and analysis, professional analysis and judgement and action plan.

The below graph demonstrates the overall average scoring between May 2021 and January 2023 which validates the overall stability of the quality of return interviews:

Avergae Scoring of Return Interviews between May 2021 and January 2023

Month	Score
May-21	19.3
Aug-21	18.0
Jan-22	19.6
May-22	19.3
Aug-22	20.4
Jnauary 23	20.9

Moving forward as the missing pathway has been changed, the aim will be to create a quality assurance framework of the whole missing pathway which would go further then auditing return interviews (as over the past 2 years have demonstrated similar progress) and audit the impact of disruption plans and interventions through a more holistic audit tool which could be then used to support training and best practice.

Challenges

4.6   The key risk factor we are seeing for children missing relates to their complex presentation, which can increase their missing episodes until they become settled in their placement, make positive relationships, and receive the wrap around support within their care plans and missing action plans. We are seeing some children struggle to cope post pandemic and this is manifesting in complex behaviours that are a challenge for al agencies ot manage.

There are many missing episodes and individual young people reported missing from semi-independent living placements which means that they are between the ages of 16-18years. This will be addressed in the 16-17 Homelessness Protocol monthly audit, to determine if this is a placement issue, if behaviours are complex which may result in needing to understand how the supported hours from a placement provider are being implemented, what the missing safety plans are and if the housing providers are following the missing protocol. This may also be supported with the implementation of an Ofsted framework for semi-independent living providers if they are to be on Derby City Commissioning Framework.

There remains a high number of Return Interviews to complete with young people and the volume has (over several years) and continues to present a challenge to Social Workers to keep abreast of these. This is often a compliance issue, as Social Workers understand the missing patterns and risk factors associated with children, they are case managing. Nevertheless, there is a statutory need to maintain completion of Return Interviews for all missing episodes and from the end of July residential homes once completed return interview training and where there is a clear relationship with residential staff, they identify they wish to speak to that member of staff and there is no reason for them to not complete the return interview this may ensure return interviews are being completed within statutory timescales.

Next Steps

5.0   Roll out and measure the impact of the new missing pathway which comes into effect on the 11th of July 2023.

5.1   Work with children in care teams around the completion of return interviews in statutory timescales.

5.2   Review the process and quality of return interviews being completed by Derby City Council residential staff using the new "Exception" Guidance for residential staff.

5.3   Create a holistic missing pathway audit tool to monitor the impact, what works to reduce missing episodes and use this analysis to further shape interventions and training resources.

5.4   Take the missing safety plan to the children in care council for feedback and make any appropriate changes.

5.5   Work in partnership with commissioning services in the Autumn 2023 to offer training and support for semi-independent housing providers on the missing protocol and share best practice around prevention and disruption of missing episodes.

Public/stakeholder engagement

6.0   There have been regular meetings between the police, Children in Care and the missing team around how we can best support our young people and colleagues in residential homes.

6.1   The Missing Person's Monitoring Group following consultation with partners has included elements of Place based Risk and Disruptive strategies to best   measure the direction of travel of these young people.

6.2   The Missing Strategic continues to monitor the progress and implement new actions for the missing action plan in line with the needs of the young people and works in accordance with the missing protocol.

Other options

7.0

Financial and value for money issues

8.0   There are no financial issues, as there is no funding attached to the missing action plan or the missing protocol. We have had to utilise the resources of the partnership to skill up staff, develop the action plan, ensure appropriate training, and review progress.

Legal implications

9.0 No other legal implications.

Climate Implications

10.0 No climate implications

Other significant implications

11.0 No other significant implications

This report has been approved by the following people:

Role	Name	Date of sign-off
Legal	Olu Idowu, Head of Legal & Insurance Services	
Finance	Janice Hadfield, Head of Finance	
Service Director(s)	Andy Smith, Strategic Director of Peoples Services	17.07.2023
Report sponsor	Suanne Lim, Director of Early Help & Childrens Social Care	
Other(s)	NA	

Background papers:	
List of appendices:	