

## **Missing Children**

### **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 and young people who go missing.

### **Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 To acknowledge progress made and actions to be completed.
- 2.2 To explore the additional actions to support the reduction in the number of missing episodes for young people placed in Derby City Council Residential Homes and Foster Care in the City.
- 2.3 To ensure those looked after young people in out of authority placements are monitored and supported appropriately

### **Reason(s)**

- 3.1 To ensure Early Help and Safeguarding services maintain the profile of missing children.
- 3.2 To have appropriate policies and procedures in place to keep those most vulnerable children safe, and effective use of the Missing Young Peoples Protocol.

## Supporting information

- 4.1 The People's Directorate in Derby City is committed to ensuring missing children remains a priority area of practice due to the risks associated young people involved in when they go missing.
- 4.2 The arrangements for delivering the Missing Protocol sit across the partnership and there is a well-established good working relationship with Derbyshire Constabulary Vulnerability Unit, there is a wide membership on the Missing Person's strategic group which includes Youth Offending Service, Voluntary sector organisations such as Catch 22 and Safe and Sound, Children in Care Service, Child Protection Managers and locality Social Care Teams.
- 4.3 Data is collected on every missing episode reported via the Missing Performance and Tracking Co-ordinator on a weekly basis in preparation for the MPMG (Missing Person's Monitoring Group) to ensure that numbers and frequency of episodes is well monitored and processes where there are high risk young people can be implemented. The Police are also notified, and this data informs their high-level meeting.
- 4.4 The system of recording data on to the service's case management system including return interviews is now fully operational and the return interview form has been revised to ensure increased effectiveness. There has also been a focus on how staff are supported to complete return interviews and what additional capacity for the Children in Care Team is needed to ensure completion within the required timescales. There is now additional emphasis on the why and where young people are going.
- 4.5 There is a higher percentage of Missing episodes by young people from our own Residential Children Homes. This is often a small number of young people with frequent episodes. The lead officer for missing supports the Concordat and there is now a presence at all enhanced case management meetings to further understand why and where young people go.
- 4.6 The work has been focused in the Missing Strategic Group to look at where young people are going, and this is being linked into the Place Based Risks agenda. We are in the process of generating location maps and have identified five hot spots across the City that have been shared with partners. They are:
  - Mackworth and Morley Area
  - River gardens
  - Bus Station
  - Curzon Street and surrounding area
  - Racecourse – Chaddesdon Park

This knowledge will support the Place Based Risk agenda and provide information to Team around the School and Community meetings Residential Case Management meetings.

- 4.7 Figures for July – December 2021 informs us that there was 310 missing episodes. The below table demonstrates where the placement of these missing episodes:

| Missing Episodes      | Placement Type                 |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 61 (10 young people)  | DCC residential homes          |
| 31 (6 young people)   | Foster Care                    |
| 128 (16 young people) | Semi-Independent Living        |
| 31 (7 young people)   | In Independent and Unregulated |

There are roughly 59 missing episodes for children placed out of area and these are from independent residential homes and foster care placements.

The number of missing episodes from a DCC residential home has significantly reduced since the previous reporting period, a decrease of 119 missing episodes.

However, the number of missing episodes for LAC and placed in semi-independent living has increased this reporting period by 85 missing episodes but this for 16 young people as opposed to only 9 in the last reporting period. Those persistently missing from DCC residential placement have been transitioned to semi-independent living and could be seen as the reason for this increase.

- 4.8 Future actions to address as referenced in 2.1 and comparison to previous 6 months to demonstrate progression.

### **Public/stakeholder engagement**

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 The Missing Strategic Meeting has self -evaluated its performance And strategy against a tool to examine our base line and this has been pivotal in completing the Missing Action Plan for 2021/22.
- 5.4 We continue with partners to audit the quality and process of Return Interviews.

### **Other options**

- 6.1
- 6.2

### **Financial and value for money issues**

- 7.1 Increased numbers of missing episodes which require return interviews impacts on the capacity of frontline staff.

### **Legal implications**

- 8.1 None directly arising from this report.

### **Other significant implications**

- 9.1 N/A.

**This report has been approved by the following people:**

| <b>Role</b>                | <b>Name</b>   | <b>Date of sign-off</b> |
|----------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Legal</b>               | Olu Idowu     | 01/04/22                |
| <b>Finance</b>             | Alison Parkin |                         |
| <b>Service Director(s)</b> | Suanne Lim    | 04/04/22                |
| <b>Report sponsor</b>      | Andy Smith    | 04/04/22                |
| <b>Other(s)</b>            |               |                         |

**Background papers:**

**List of appendices:**