



Derby City Council

**Corporate Parenting Committee
23 February 2016**

ITEM 7

Report of the Strategic Director of Children and Young People

Children and Young People Missing from Care

SUMMARY

- 1.1 A report was presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee in December 2015 outlining plans to strengthen the Councils response to help children and young people who go missing.
- 1.2 The plan to reduce the incidences of children and young people going missing has been in place since May 2015 and was updated in January 2016.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To note the progress on the Improvement Plan to reduce the incidences of children and young people who go missing
- 2.2 To endorse plans for future actions and recommendations

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The response to help young people who go missing, or who are at risk of going missing, was considered to be in need of strengthening, including more robust monitoring, delivering preventative work to support young people and developing a better understanding of the reasons why young people go missing.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4.1 Four children who were in foster care had a total of seven missing episodes during the quarter. One of these was a young person placed in the City from out of the area who then ran back to their previous foster carer. Two young people were cared for in private fostering arrangements. One of these, along with a child placed in foster care through local authority arrangements, are now cared for in a DCC children's home.
- 4.2 No reports have been received of young people placed out of the area by the Council, who have had a missing episode during quarter three.

- 4.3 Audits are now being carried out every quarter by the Missing Persons Monitoring Group. The audit carried out on 30 November looked at a sample of nine return interviews. In all cases the child's view was sought. An area for improvement is seeking the views of carers; these were sought or recorded in only four instances. Four Return Interviews had been completed within 72 hours of the young person returning home, in accordance with the Runaway and Missing from Home or Care protocol (RMFHC). Ensuring compliance in relation to this is also an area for improvement. Good analysis of information gathered, including reflection by the young person on the missing episode was evident in four of the RI's. Plans for preventative work were clearly identified in three cases. The summary from the report of the audit exercise is attached at Appendix One.

Reasons why the young person went missing were recorded as:

Unhappy at home

Lost track of time and then afraid to go home as would be in trouble for staying out

Met friends on park, drinking alcohol

Out with friends-wanted to go to club

Went to see boyfriend in Birmingham

Out with friends

Specific risks/vulnerabilities recorded :

Drinking alcohol

Young person of low mood

Relationship with parent difficult

CSE

Substance misuse

Smoking

Physically assaulted

- 4.4 At the end of last year a time focused piece of work was undertaken to ensure all outstanding return interviews from 1 April 2015 were completed and recorded on the young person's file. Support for Runaways and social workers was drafted in from MAT and children's centre teams and guidance given to staff from these teams on how to carry out return interviews.

- 4.5 Overall, compliance with the Runaway and Missing from Home or Care protocol in terms of completion of the return interviews within 72 hours has improved somewhat. Quality, however, continues to be variable. A mandatory training programme is now in place, put together by Workforce Development and Training, with a first half day session delivered on 20 January, followed by one every two weeks until the end of March and monthly from April.
- 4.6 An apprentice has been in post since 18 January. She has specific responsibilities to monitor and collate data in relation to missing children This should give the three part time Runaways Workers some capacity to be able to deliver targeted preventative with children who are looked after. This has already started in one of the DCC children's homes
- 4.7 Links have been established with the new Vulnerability Unit established by the police and based at St Marys Wharf. We will be working closely with the team to support children and young people to understand how they can keep themselves safe.
- 4.8 Ensuring completion of Return Interviews where young people are placed in the City from outside the area has been problematic and patchy, despite the fact that placing local authorities and independent homes are made aware that they must comply with our protocol. With immediate effect Runaways Workers will, where a Return Interview for a looked after child placed in the City has not been completed within 72 hours, visit the child and undertake completion of the Return Interview. The social worker for the child (and placing authority) will then receive a copy of the Return Interview together with a letter stating that, since they have been unable to complete the interview we have done this on their behalf

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 Do nothing. However, the previous arrangements that were in place were not considered robust enough for the local authority to be confident that children and young people were being adequately safeguarded.

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Legal officer Financial officer Human Resources officer Estates/Property officer Service Director(s) Other(s)	Iain Peel – Service Director – Learning and Inclusion Services
For more information contact: Background papers: List of appendices:	Donna Brooks 01332 641317 donna.brooks@derby.gov.uk None Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 –Summary from Audit Report

IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money

- 1.1 The cost of a new apprentice is about 6k a year. The cost of a missing person e-mail account is going to be approximately £300

Legal

- 2.1 The Local Authority has a responsibility to protect children from significant harm (CA 1989) and to provide services to children who are considered to be vulnerable including children who go missing

Personnel

- 3.1 A new apprentice has started work covering the collation of statistics about this vulnerable group of children.

IT

- 4.1 A missing person email address is going to be set up for all out of authority providers, including foster carers, to use to report missing children. This will then automatically send alerts to social workers, IROs and the new apprentice for missing children

Equalities Impact

- 5.1 Children missing from home and care are often multiply disadvantaged.

Health and Safety

- 6.1 There are significant risks to children when missing from home and care. .

Environmental Sustainability

- 7.1 None arising from this report

Property and Asset Management

- 8.1 None arising from this report

Risk Management

9.1

There are both risks to the children themselves and risks for the Council of not properly monitoring and assisting this group of significantly vulnerable children.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 10.1 **EIISS Obj1** Support children and young people to remain safely within their communities

EIISS Obj2 Provide effective and accessible early help to prevent children from becoming vulnerable

Appendix 2

Summary from Audit Report

The audit has highlighted the need to review the format of the RI form; there is a tendency for workers to use this as a tick sheet, rather than adequately record the meeting they have with the young person and to take the opportunity to ask open ended questions; young people should be asked what change they consider would need to happen in order for them not to run away again.

Parents and carers views are not being routinely sought.

Links between missing and CSE are well known and understood by workers. Despite this the CSE matrix was not always being completed

A guidance sheet to be used alongside the form may be helpful.

Analysis was not well recorded on the forms ; some guidance in relation to this would be helpful.

In the majority of cases workers are not following the RMFHC protocol, and there is a danger that the completion of these forms is being perceived by some workers as a 'tick box' exercise - something they have to do but that adds no real value to the work they are doing with the young person.

Auditing by MPMG members highlighted the need to make some amendments to the audit form in order to be able to more readily collate audit findings.

Recommendations:

- **Revision to the RI form**
- **Guidance sheet for workers to use alongside the RI to be produced**
- **Training that is to be delivered to all workers(from January 2016) to ensure that discussions include how workers can, and should, use the return interview as an opportunity to explore issues with the young person, and to inform their future work and plans for the young person.**

- **Managers to be reminded that they should QA RIs before these are forwarded to the locality Runaways Workers, ensure they have been fully completed.**
- **Revision to the audit form**

All these recommendations will be incorporated into the revision of the Missing Improvement Plan.