

# FACT SHEET: Think Missing

## Reasons why Children go Missing:

The Children's Society through research has identified the following risk factors that can precede a missing incident for a young person, otherwise known as 'push/pull' factors:

- Arguments and conflicts at home including being told/forced to leave
- Poor family relationships including specific step-parent issues
- Physical and emotional abuse including Domestic Abuse
- Personal wellbeing – feeling depressed, needing someone to talk to
- Problems at school
- Problems with alcohol and/or drugs
- Grooming, Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
- Placement instability for looked after children, and children who are placed at some distance from their family and friends.

## NCT Missing Children Team (MCT)

Upon children and young people returning or being found; Northamptonshire Police will carry out a 'Safe and well check' and refer them to the Northamptonshire childrens trust MCT who will create the missing/found episode on their system. The MCT will then arrange to carry out a Return Home Interview (RHI) and aim to complete all RHI's within 72 hours of the child or young person being allocated to the practitioner. The RHI is updated and stored on NCT's system (CareFirst). For young people found in Northamptonshire RHI's are sent to Northamptonshire police. Where the child or young person has an allocated Social Worker or Independent reviewing officer (IRO) they will also receive a copy.

## Out of Northamptonshire

Where children and young people are looked after and are placed out of county, it is the local Police to their placement that are responsible for carrying out the Safe and well visit.

The placement provider will notify the allocated NCT Social Worker, or an Emergency Duty Team (EDT) if out of hours, that the child or young person has gone missing and then subsequently when the child is found. EDT, the allocated Social Worker or Family Support Worker should notify the MCT at the earliest possible opportunity that the young person is missing/found. (See below Flowcharts). Northamptonshire MCT email address: [irt@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:irt@northamptonshire.gov.uk)

It is the responsibility of the NCT to conduct all the return interview with any young person who lives out of Northamptonshire, but are the responsibility of NCT.

## Social Worker Visits

When visiting children and young people who have been missing and have returned, social work visits must include discussions about the missing episode (having taken into account the information from the RHI) and what can be done to prevent the child or young person from going missing again.

For looked after children and young people, the allocated Social Worker must ensure those with parental responsibility are informed about the missing episode, subsequent visits and outcomes from the visits.

It is essential that information obtained from the RHI is reviewed in order to identify necessary actions. All arising actions should be recorded on CareFirst by the allocated Social Worker.

## Missing Child Strategy Meetings

NCT Team Managers and Service Managers should be informed by the Social Worker when a child or young person is reported missing.

The '[Northamptonshire Multi-agency Protocol for Children who run away or go missing from home or Care](#)' details responsibilities for carrying out strategy meetings when children and young people go missing.

## Flowchart One: Missing from care child response

**Child goes missing** Placement to follow Philomena protocol and conduct their own enquiries to locate the child, updating existing Philomena form accordingly (the only exception to this is if the missing episode is in an emergency situation. This requires a 999 call). If the child can't be located by placement staff, then the missing episode should be reported to the local area **police**.

**Placement provider** notifies allocated Social Worker and the Emergency Duty Team (EDT) (if out of hours) of the missing episode

**If child is placed out of county** the allocated **Social Worker or EDT** (if out of hours) notifies the NCT Missing Children's Team (MCT) of the missing episode, as soon as possible – **before the close of the day**

**MCT admin** create a 'Missing assessment' on the CareFirst system, this remains open whilst young person remains missing. A 'Found assessment' is created when the child is found. **The missing co-ordinator** allocates each found young person to a professional (usually in the young peoples service) to conduct a Return Home Interview, oversees the interviews and authorises the RHI with recommendations and onward referrals following the interview.

**MCT** send a copy of the completed and authorised RHI to Northamptonshire police and the child/young persons Social Worker and IRO, if they have one. Any safeguarding concerns from the RHI will be shared and actioned before this time.

## Flowchart Two: Return Home Interview (RHI) Process for Looked After Children

