

# Missing high risk operational group

## Terms of Reference



### Purpose of the Group

The group will take a lead in scrutinising the cases of high risk children who are missing from home, care and/or education. In addition to this the group will share information and intelligence about venues, people or locations involved in children going missing. The group will use this information and intelligence to target strategic action with the overall aim of reducing the incidence of children going missing and/or reducing the risks that they face.

### Areas of Responsibility

The group will consider children (under 18 years or up to 25 years if there are additional vulnerabilities such as being a care leaver or having special educational needs) living in Waltham Forest, as well as children who are looked after by Waltham Forest placed elsewhere and children who are looked after by other authorities placed in Waltham Forest, that:

- Are of concern to individual agencies
- Are considered to be high risk or vulnerable (for example due to their age, disability and/or links to other risks such as child sexual exploitation, gangs, trafficking, etc.)
- Where the length or frequency of the missing episodes are a cause for concern

The group will also analyse data to consider:

- Any premises or locations which could be considered a 'hot spot'.
- Themes and trends extracted from return interviews

The group will monitor these children to ascertain whether Waltham Forest's missing practice guidance has been adhered to in each case, and identify what further action / escalation is necessary. The group will review updates or actions from any previous meetings.

The meeting will not replace the operational team management or accountability for the cases but it will provide a challenge and scrutiny function.

Where there are also concerns about Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) with a child, and their case has been heard at MASE (Multi-agency sexual exploitation panel), the minutes and actions from the MASE will be shared with the missing group. The decision about whether a child needs to be discussed at the missing children operational group as well as MASE will be made on a case by case basis. It will sometimes be necessary to hold a CSE strategy

meeting for a child referred into the panel where there are links to CSE, and it is expected that this will take place prior to the referral being made to the panel.

## **Tasks**

In advance of the meeting the MASH missing coordinator will highlight children that meet the criteria for discussion, as well as any others that professionals are concerned about. The children's names will then be forwarded on to the relevant social care, or other teams and agencies, with a request for an update in advance of the meeting from the relevant professional(s).

The children will be discussed at the meeting and any actions arising for professionals from all agencies will be disseminated from the meeting with a request for co-operation.

The group will meet monthly and will be co-chaired by the manager of the missing persons unit and the head of children in care.

## **Membership**

The core membership will be:-

- Police Missing Person Manager (chair)
- Head of children in care (co-chair)
- Education Children Missing Officer
- Early help coordinator with lead for Missing/CSE
- Child sexual exploitation coordinator
- St Christopher's return interview service
- Head of youth offending
- Lead for county lines (TBC)
- MASH missing coordinator
- Specialist provision education representative
- Mainstream provision education representative
- School admissions officer
- Independent reviewing officer (where appropriate)

Other professionals may be invited as necessary i.e. placements team or independent providers.

## **How to refer in**

It is an expectation of the panel that the appropriate level of operational planning will have been undertaken before a referral is made to the group. It is also an expectation of the group that a CSE risk assessment is considered for any children referred to the missing children operational group due to the evidenced link between CSE and children missing.

Professionals can refer to the panel using the referral form (see appendix), along with any return interviews that have been completed with the child (if applicable).

The deadline for referrals will be 10 days prior to the meeting and paperwork will be sent out to panel members a week prior to the meeting. Referrals must be submitted **securely** to (insert relevant mailbox – TBC).

### **Accountability**

The group will maintain actions of each meeting by way of the updated master database, which will define owners for all actions and timescales for completion. The group will be accountable to the Waltham Forest LSCB child sexual exploitation/children missing strategic group and will submit quarterly reports to the group on strategic issues/data trends.