



**Suffolk Safeguarding
Children Board**

Safeguarding Children Who Run Away or Go Missing from Home or Care

Policy, Procedures and Practice Guidance

May 2016

Version	Date of PPE Approval	Author
5	23rd June 2016	Head of Safeguarding, Children and Young People's Services, Suffolk County Council and Detective Superintendent, Public Protection (Protecting Vulnerable Persons), Suffolk Constabulary

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1. Introduction

1.1. This document provides guidance to professionals and volunteers from all agencies in Suffolk working to ensure a collaborative response when:

- A child is at risk of running away
- A child runs away and goes missing from home or care.

1.2. It aims to provide guidance for assessing both the risk to the child or young person and the support needs on return and should be read in conjunction with the *Suffolk Safeguarding Children Board Procedures*

<http://www.suffolkscb.org.uk>

1.3. The framework for the procedures is based on:

- Statutory Guidance on children who run away and go missing from home or care January 2014

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-who-run-away-or-go-missing-from-home-or-care>

- ACPO Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons 2010

[ACPO \(2010\) Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons \(Second Edition\)](#)

- ACPO Interim Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons 2013

[ACPO \(2013\) Interim Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons](#)

- Children Act 1989

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents>

- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419595/Working_Together_to_Safeguard_Children.pdf

2. Monitoring Arrangements for Missing Children

2.1 The Head of Safeguarding, Children & Young People's Services Suffolk County Council and the Detective Superintendent Public Protection (Protecting Vulnerable Persons), Suffolk Constabulary are responsible for the policy and procedures.

2.2 The LSCB multi-agency Exploited Children Group will:

- Provide the strategic lead for the development of proactive work across the partnership on Exploited Children.

- Develop and monitor a multi-agency action plan to progress the identification and safeguarding of children who go missing from home or care.
- Provide regular updates to the LSCB, highlighting progress on the action plan, areas for practice and policy development, outcomes of any county working groups and any data or statistics required for audit and scrutiny purposes.
- Link policy and practice initiatives to Children at risk of Sexual Exploitation/ Gangs and Groups and Children Missing Education.
- Receive updates from the missing children co-ordinator as to progress on the co-ordination of data on missing children, return interviews etc.

2.3 The Missing children coordinator can be contacted via:

Missing.children@suffolk.gcsx.gov

Holly.boyd-lambley@suffolk.gov.uk (encrypt securely) 01473 260532

3. Definitions

- **Child:** anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.
- **Young runaway:** a child who has run away from their home or care placement, or feels they have been forced to leave or lured to leave.
- **Missing child:** a child reported as missing to the police by their family or carers*.
- **Children in Care:** a child who is looked after by a local authority by reason of a care order, or being accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989.
- **Missing from care:** a child in care, who is not at their placement, or the place they are expected to be (e.g. school) and their whereabouts is not known.
- **Away from placement without Unauthorised absence** is where a child in care's whereabouts is known or thought to be known but unconfirmed, they are not missing and may instead be considered as absent without authorisation from their placement.
- **Child Abduction:** where a child has been abducted or forcibly removed from their place of residence, this is a 'crime in action' and should be reported to the police immediately.

Police Definitions:

- **Missing:** *A child whose whereabouts cannot be established, and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be a subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or others.*
- **Absent:** *A child (person) not at a place they are expected or required to be, when the behaviour is out of character and there is no apparent risk.*

****This report will include those children reported as ‘Absent’ throughout the year April 2015 – April 2016 however, as of July 2016, Suffolk police are no longer using the term ‘absent’. As a result of this, post July 2016, all children reported missing from home, care or school will be risk assessed and if local/national definition of missing is met, will be classified as a ‘missing child’.***

4. The Legal Framework

- 4.1. The law does not generally regard young people under the age of 16 as being able to live independently away from home.
- 4.2. Where a child/young person under 16 (or 18 if disabled) stays with a person (other than a person with parental responsibility or a close relative), for 28 days or more, the person caring for them is acting as a ‘private foster carer’ within the meaning of s66 of the Children Act 1989 and therefore they must notify the local authority that they are privately fostering the child/young person. Failure to notify the Local Authority may be an offence.
- 4.3. Anyone who has care of a child without parental responsibility may do what *is reasonable* in all the circumstances to safeguard and promote the child’s welfare (Children Act 1989 s3 (5)). It is likely to be ‘reasonable’ to inform the police, or Children’s Social Care, and, if appropriate, their parents, of the child/ young person’s safety and whereabouts.
- 4.4. Anyone who ‘takes or detains’ a runaway under 16 without lawful authority may be prosecuted under s2 of the Child Abduction Act 1984. The enforcement of this provision might be problematic, however, if the young person has chosen to stay with an adult of his or her own free will.

5. Causes of Running Away

- 5.1 Children represented approximately two thirds of the estimated 360,000 missing person incidents in 2009-10. The reasons for running away are varied, complex and unique to individual children. Running away is often a sign that something is wrong in the child’s or young person’s life. Main reasons for running away are:
 - Problems at home – ranging from arguments with parents to long-term abuse or maltreatment.
 - Mental health problems.
 - Bullying, racial harassment, homophobia.
 - Teenage pregnancy.
 - Wanting to be near friends or family – especially when a young person is in care and there are problems in contact arrangements with family and friends. Children in care are three times more likely to go missing than children not in care.

- Grooming for sexual exploitation – evidence suggests that 90% of children subject to sexual exploitation go missing at some point. See guidance on Children Abused Through Sexual Exploitation.
- Forced Marriage - some young people run away because they are at risk of or in a forced marriage. See guidance on Forced Marriage and Honour- Based Violence.
- Child Trafficking- young people may go missing when they are being trafficked. See Guidance on Safeguarding Children from Trafficking.

6. Children Missing Education

Children and young people who run away and go missing are clearly likely to be missing from education. Some children missing from education may be missing from home. [Children Missing Education Procedures](#)

7. Services to Young People who May Run Away

- 7.1 All agencies will be alert to the needs of children who may run away and such services can be identified according to the specific needs of a young person through the Team Around the Child process/Targeted Youth Support. This will help to identify cases of running early and provide the opportunity to address these issues and prevent escalation.
- 7.2 Information for young people is available through the Suffolk Information. Advice & Guidance for young people website – www.thesource.me.uk/care
- 7.3 Children with mental health needs, learning and physical disabilities are particularly vulnerable when going missing. They may have communication difficulties and they may have fewer opportunities to disclose reasons for running away. Practitioners should be alert to the particular needs of disabled children, making sure they know how to raise concerns and receive whatever additional assistance and support they require.
- 7.4 Practitioners should be aware that young people may run away because of issues of sexuality and may need support and access to specialist youth or advocacy services, information on national telephone helplines.
- 7.5 Suffolk County Council Children & Young People's Services have emergency accommodation available for young people for whom it is not in their best interests to return home.

8. Police Actions when a child goes missing from home/care

- 8.1 In most cases a parent/carer will contact the police if they are concerned about a child who has not returned home as expected or whose whereabouts give rise for concern. There are some situations where a runaway/missing child comes to the attention of an agency/member of the community who may

not been reported to the Police e.g. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child and in these circumstances the Police must be contacted.

Suffolk Police: Command and Control Room (CCR) ☎ 101 or 999 in an emergency.

8.2 Following new definitions introduced by the Association of Police Officers (ACPO) Suffolk Constabulary will make a decision about whether the child is **missing** or **absent**.

8.3 **Absent**

Children can very often test the boundaries of authority and may absent themselves for short periods of time and then return and are not necessarily at risk. The 'Absent' category can apply to children living at home as well as those in care. It is expected that all reasonable steps should be taken by parents or care to locate the child prior to making a report to the police.

Call takers in the Police Command and Control Room are trained in carrying out risk assessments to define a child as 'missing' or 'absent'. This decision will always be ratified by the CCR Inspector/Supervisor. Whenever there is a doubt over the safety of a child, they will be classified as 'missing'. Any child classified as 'absent' will be re-classified as 'missing' if warranted.

Police will record all absences on the COMPACT database and agree with the reporting person a time frame for review. This time frame will not exceed 4 hours and may be much shorter depending on the circumstances of the case for example, the time of day and the age of the child.

Notification of the absent episode will always be sent to CYPS via an automatic email.

When the child is located or returns, the parent or carer should notify the police and pass on any relevant details concerning the absence. COMPACT will be updated and an automatic e-mail notification sent to CYPS for consideration by the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) if there any welfare or safeguarding concerns for the child resulting from the absent episode.

8.4 **Missing**

Where Police decide to deal with an episode as 'missing' a COMPACT record will be created and an officer deployed to take a full missing person report. The officer will also make a full assessment of risk. The level of risk (high, medium, or low) will determine the police response. All children will be initially recorded as high risk until reviewed by a supervisor after which the risk may be downgraded to medium. COMPACT will be updated and an automatic email notification sent to Customer First for the attention of CYPS. Police will submit a referral 'PVP' (Protecting Vulnerable People) to the MASH for all missing children as soon as the risk assessment has been completed.

A senior police officer will supervise the investigation to locate the missing child. Police will liaise with CYPS and other agencies at all stages of the investigation.

When the child is located it is the responsibility of the parent or carer to return the child. If the circumstances pose a risk to the child or the parent/carer, a police officer may accompany them, or the police may be requested to collect and return the child.

The COMPACT record will be updated and an automatic e-mail notification sent to CYPS.

9. Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

9.1 **CYPS, Police and partner agencies in the MASH** will share information and assess the risks to the child *whether still missing or returned*. Particular attention will be paid to the child's age and vulnerability and ascertaining if the child has:

- Gone missing/run away on more than one occasion.
- Been missing/run away for more than 24 hours.
- Been involved as a victim or perpetrator of criminal behaviour whilst missing /running way.
- Known mental health issues.
- Known risk of sexual exploitation.
- Known risk of contact with persons posing risk to children.
- Incidents that have resulted in child protection/ children in need assessments.
- Domestic abuse/forced marriage/honour- based violence.

9.2 This discussion will be informed by the Police Safe and Well Check/Return Interview (see below) if the child has returned home and by information from other agencies.

9.3 Agreement will be reached and recorded about the course of action to assist or protect the child and may include:

- Completion of a Common Assessment (CAF) and consideration of a team around the child (TAC) approach. It may be appropriate for a professional already involved with the child to conduct a Return Interview as part of this e.g. a worker within an Early Help Team.
- Assessment of need by Children's Social Care. The views of the child gained in the Return Interview will be of great importance and will inform the assessment and decision – making. The arrangements for this will be co-ordinated by Children's Social Care and recorded as part of the statutory assessment. An assessment may result in signposting a child/ family for a service, consideration under [Common Assessment](#)

Framework (CAF) Process, services under s17 or action under s47 of the Children Act for work by Early Help Teams.

- Consideration must be given to an assessment by social care or a strategy discussion convened where a return interview has revealed concerns for the child's safety or wellbeing.
- A strategy discussion must be convened by Children's Social Care whenever there is reasonable cause to suspect that the child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm and/or or has:
 - Has been missing for 24 hours.
 - Has been missing on 2 or more occasions within the previous 30 days.

9.4 The strategy discussion will determine actions, including undertaking and planning section 47 enquiries. Note that a strategy discussion in the form of a meeting must be considered where there are complex circumstances, is more than 1 child involved and always where child sexual abuse/multiple abuse is suspected.

- Alerts to any other Local Authorities where the child may be located, health agencies, Children Missing Education service will be made by CYPS where a child has not been located. (missing.children@suffolk.gcsx.gov.uk)
- Actions identified for Police only resulting from information sharing with Children's Social Care/ other agencies.

9.5 If the child has been missing more than once or over 24 hours s/he will be subject of multi-agency review at the **Monthly Police-led Tactical & Tasking Co-ordination Group Meeting (TTCG)**.

9.6 Unaccompanied children

Children arriving in Suffolk unaccompanied will automatically be classified as high risk by Police and social care due to their additional vulnerabilities including the potential of being trafficked.

10. Emergency Duty Service

10.1 Procedures are set out to include occasions when children and young people go missing/are located out-of-office hours and the involvement of the Emergency Duty Service (EDS) is required. The Emergency Duty Service has established protocols for working with other agencies where there are concerns about children. The EDS manager has a system for monitoring incidents of children who run away and go missing and ensures that these cases are sampled as part of the quality assurance process.

10.2 Where Police have immediate concerns about the circumstances of a child who has been reported absent or missing from home out of office hours e.g. if there is concern that the child may be at risk if returned home, the Police will contact Emergency Duty Services to assess the child's needs and make

appropriate arrangements for their accommodation. This will include young people who may be at risk of honour-based violence/forced marriage.

- 10.3 Should EDS have any involvement with a missing child who is allocated to a social care team they will inform the allocated team and worker, or in the case of a child not already receiving services from CYPS, the MASH for action as soon as day time service resumes.
- 10.4 Social Care teams will send an alert to EDS where a child with whom they are working has run away/gone missing from home, with specific plans on location.
- 10.5 There is an established decision-making process for responding to children for whom there are concerns out of hours within residential or foster care. The Children's Home Out Of Hours Support Service Manager or the Fostering Service Out Of Hours Support Service Manager will liaise with and support carers in the decision regarding reporting a child missing to the Police. EDS will be informed and become involved when required e.g. if there is concern that an alternative placement is required for the child.
- 10.6 Should EDS have any involvement with a child in care that has run away, they will inform the Children's Social Care team for action as soon as day time service resumes.
- 10.7 Social Care teams will also send an alert to EDS where a child with whom they are working has run away/gone missing from care, or is at risk of going missing, with specific plans on location.

11. When a Child is Located

11.1. Police Safe & Well Check

This will be carried out as soon as possible after the young person has returned home. The purpose is to establish where the child has been, with whom and whether they came to any harm. It is common for children to be reluctant to engage in this process. If this is the case, it is important that the police officer conducting the check records their demeanour, their physical state and any other factors that may be relevant later – this is part of the investigation. The details will be forwarded on the COMPACT record to the MASH.

11.2. Return Interviews

This interview should take place within 72 hours of the young person being located or returning from absence and will be especially important if any risk factors are in evidence e.g. the child has been missing overnight, may have been involved in criminal activities during absence, has mental health issues or may have been hurt or harmed.

Where the young person and family is being assisted through the CAF process, or a referral is made for CAF process, it will be undertaken by the Lead Professional and will update the CAF and plan for the child.

Where Children's Social Care are involved already with the child under CiN/CP plan or are undertaking a statutory assessment they should conduct the return interview which will be an essential part of the assessment and decision making process. It should be recorded on the child's electronic record.

All children who go missing from home or care should be offered an independent return interview which in Suffolk is commissioned from Anglia Care Trust and accessed via the Safeguarding

Missing.Children@suffolk.gcsx.gov.uk

11.3. This interview will:

- Identify any harm the child may have suffered- including harm that might not have been disclosed as part of the Safe and Well Check – either before they ran away or whilst missing.
- Understand and try to address the reasons why the child ran away
- Help the child feel safe and understand that they have options to prevent repeat instances of them running away.
- Develop a safety plan which will include information on how to stay safe if they choose to run away again, including helpline numbers.

11.4. Where young people refuse to take part in the return interview parents and carer must be offered the opportunity to provide any relevant information and intelligence of which they may be aware. This should help to prevent further instances of the child running away and identify early the support needed for them.

11.5. Carers and social workers should be ascertaining information about the circumstances that occurred leading to the child going missing and what occurred during the missing event.

11.6. Consideration must always be given to convening a strategy discussion and undertaking sec 47 enquiries. This should routinely consider other young people or adults involved with the child around the missing event.

11.7. **Children Who Repeatedly Go Missing**

For those young people who repeatedly go missing **and certainly if there have been 2 episodes of missing within the previous 30 day period**, a strategy discussion/meeting needs to be convened to evaluate all information and determine whether there is a need to conducting enquiries under s47, convene an Initial Child Protection Conference etc. Chronologies will be used to assist in identifying patterns of absence.

11.8. **Children Who Have Not Been Found**

Police and Social Care will monitor the progress of efforts to locate children who have gone missing. If a child has not been found within 72 hours of receipt of referral and earlier depending on the age and circumstances of the child, the Head of Safeguarding and the Head of Children's Social Care

must be informed who will need to satisfy themselves that everything is being done to locate and safeguard the child. Media assistance may be required in some cases and this decision will be taken at a strategy meeting.

11.9. Suffolk's CYPS Missing Children Coordinator is responsible for escalating and alerting senior management to these children unless there are immediate concerns in which case the allocated worker should alert their management in the first instance. The escalation process is as follows:

1. Missing for 24 hours – alert sent to allocated worker and practice manager who at this stage should hold a strategy discussion with MASH/Police and consider if there is a need for a complex strategy meeting.
2. Missing for 48 hours – alert sent to allocated worker, practice manager, service manager and safeguarding manager and consideration should be given to whether there is a need for a complex strategy meeting.
3. Missing for 72 hours – alert sent to the above as well as the Head of Safeguarding and the Head of Children's Social Care. It is at this stage that a complex strategy meeting must be held.

11.10. Strategy Meetings should be held by the manager of the Social Care Team in the first instance. Where there is a rapid increase and escalation of complex concerns for the child, a discussion should be held with the service manager and safeguarding manager to ascertain if a Complex Strategy Meeting is required. Should this be agreed, the Complex Strategy Meeting should be organised and chaired by the County Safeguarding Manager.

12. Support for 16 and 17 Year Olds Missing

16 and 17 year olds who run away or go missing are not necessarily any less vulnerable than younger children and are likely to need as much support to get their lives on track and make a successful transition into adulthood. However, as young people over 16 can choose to leave home it may be necessary to involve other services such as housing officers in the assessment of their needs. There are inter-agency arrangements for 'Young People of 16 & 17 years who are homeless' which must be used in these circumstances. Vulnerable young people need to be in a secure housing setting. No 16 or 17 year old should be placed in Bed & Breakfast accommodation by housing or children's services, except in an emergency and for the shortest time possible, where B&B is the only available alternative to rooflessness.

13. Children in Care Who Go Missing

- 13.1 The Local Authority has the same duty of care towards all children who are in care i.e. children accommodated under s20 of the Children Act 1989, and children who are subject of a care or interim care order.
- 13.2 It is important to be concerned for the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person who goes missing from care in terms of not only what might happen to them whilst missing, but also because of their reasons for doing so.
- 13.3 Where there is a possibility that a child in care will run away and go missing from a residential home or foster placement, then the child's care plan, along with the placement plan, should include a strategy to minimise this risk.

14. Unauthorised Absence/Missing

- 14.1 Young people may be accidentally or deliberately late home whilst their whereabouts are known and their safety or wellbeing is not necessarily jeopardised. These circumstances will not be treated as 'missing' and will not be reported to the Police.
- 14.2 Where young people are away from their placement and carers, in conjunction with managers, are concerned about their safety all efforts will be made to ensure the young person is returned to the placement. Where it is considered that there is a safeguarding issue e.g. the child is at risk of harm, then contact will be made with Police to agree actions.
- 14.3 Where there are repeated incidents of unauthorised absences, consideration will be given to actions to safeguard the child.
- 14.4 Where it is judged that the child judged to be absent has in fact gone **missing** following review of risk which would include last known contact and time factors, then a missing report will be made to:

Suffolk Police: Command and Control Room (CCR) ☎ 101 or 999 in an emergency.

15. Children Missing from Residential Care

- [Children Act 1989 Guidance & Regulations – Volume 5: children's homes, October 2013](#)
- [Children's Homes - National Minimum Standards](#)

- 15.1 Suffolk County Council's own Accommodation Services staff will act in accordance with the Suffolk Children's Homes Missing Children Policy (Regulation 16).

- 15.2 Preventive work will be carried out within the Local Authority Children's Homes in partnership with the police in order to help prevent incidences of children going missing.
- 15.3 Before reporting a child as missing Suffolk County Council residential carers should, following consultation with the social worker/social care manager or duty manager if Out Of Hours (CHOOHSS), take all steps a responsible parent would take, to locate the child.
- 15.4 Where the child's location or reason for absence is unknown and/or due to the circumstances, there is cause for significant concern for the child, the child must be reported missing to the Police.
- 15.5 Detailed information will be provided to the Police, in particular the risk assessment for the child including any reason to suspect that the child is at risk of significant harm in terms of abuse, self-harming behaviour, drugs, sexual exploitation or criminal behaviour and previous missing episodes. Police have primary responsibility for locating children who are missing and will work in partnership with Children's Social Care. A record will be placed on COMPACT as HIGH RISK and an active search commenced.

16. Children Missing from Foster Care

- 16.1 Suffolk foster carers will report the situation to the child's social worker/social care manager and take all steps a responsible parent would take to locate the child. If the child goes missing/runs away out of office hours the foster carer will contact the foster care duty manager (FOOHSS) who will in turn liaise with EDS (section 6).
- 16.2 Where the child is not absent without authorisation and the child's location or reason for absence is unknown and due to the circumstances there is cause for significant concern for the child, the child must be reported missing to the Police. See section 3.

17. Young People who are supported by the 16+ Service – Relevant/Eligible Care Leavers

- 17.1 The provider of this service in Suffolk, Catch 22, will follow the LSCB procedures and work with any associated partner providers such as YMCA, to ensure that procedures are in place to respond to situations where a young person they are supporting goes missing. Many of these young people are living in supported or independent settings and whilst the service has a duty to maintain regular contact there may be no 'on-site' carer. Staff will need to be alert to any risk factors which indicate a young person is likely to go missing and make plans on an individual case basis.
- 17.2 Some young people continue to be in care and others are not but the same attention will be given to each young person in terms of risks of going

missing. Independent return interviews will be arranged by Catch 22. Some young people may want to disengage from the service but where contact is lost completely and there are concerns, then the 16+ Service will liaise with Police and other colleagues.

18. Informing Parents

Parents and any persons with parental responsibility must be informed as soon as possible that their child is missing unless there are good reasons connected with the child's welfare for this to be inappropriate. Agreement must be reached about who will be responsible for informing the parents where the child is placed away from the family's home area – this will normally be the child's social worker. A record must be made as to when parents have been informed and what information has been given to them.

19. Children Who Go Missing from Care who are placed in Suffolk by another Local Authority

- 19.1 The registered manager of the Children's Home, or the fostering service, is responsible for ensuring that the accountable manager in the child's Local Authority has received the notification that a looked-after child is missing and has initiated the appropriate actions. Suffolk Children's Social Care will receive notification from Suffolk Police and forward the notification within 1 working day to the Local Authority responsible for the child.
- 19.2 Where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child in care placed in Suffolk by another local authority is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, the Suffolk MASH will convene a strategy threshold discussion to establish whether the threshold for undertaking S47 enquiries is met. The responsible local authority will be invited to participate in this discussion (by phone if required) along with the placement manager and will be responsible for informing anyone who holds parental responsibility for the child (if it is safe to do so - determined in consultation with Suffolk MASH). If the threshold for S47 enquiries are judged to have been met, Suffolk CYPS will be responsible for undertaking S47 enquiries (jointly with the Police, if required), in consultation with the other Local Authority.
- 19.3 For children who are repeatedly running away Suffolk MASH should consider the need for a strategy threshold discussion involving the child's allocated social worker from their home authority. If the threshold for S47 enquiries is met, a strategy planning meeting should be held and chaired by the county safeguarding manager, involving the child's social worker and placement manager. Where MASH decides that a strategy threshold discussion is not required about a child repeatedly going missing, the reason for the decision must be made clear.

20. Children Who Go Missing from Care who are placed by Suffolk in another Local Authority area

- 20.1 Suffolk County Council will reduce the risk of child in care going missing by placing children in the most appropriate placement. Any decision by County Resource Panel to place a child at a distance will be based on an assessment of the child's needs including their need to be effectively safeguarded. All details of any history of running away/or risk of running away will be in the child's Placement Information Record and checks will be made to ensure that the care provider (residential or foster care) has appropriate procedures in place.
- 20.2 This must include following the care providers local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care Procedures and contacting the child's social worker/ Social Care Manager in Suffolk who will consider the need for a missing child strategy discussion to include local police and ensure that a return interview is conducted within 72 hours. An early child in care (CiC) Review may be convened to address issues for the child and placement.
- 20.3 If a child placed out of county is reported missing, once the social worker has been made aware, they are required to then inform the missing children coordinator of the details via the missing children inbox – missing.children@suffolk.gcsx.gov.uk The missing children coordinator will then track the missing episode to ensure all safeguarding procedures are carried out appropriately such as a strategy discussion, following the escalation process if necessary and ensuring a return interview is carried out once the child is located.

21. Planning for the Return

- 21.1 Where a child goes missing from their care placement, plans must be made to respond promptly once the child is located. If the child is located but the professionals involved are unable to establish meaningful contact with the child, perhaps because they are under duress or being harboured, then Children's Social Care will consider whether an application for a recovery order is required.
- 21.2 Children's Social Care will consider whether the child should be returned to their placement.
- 21.3 Care staff or foster parents will need to continue to offer warm and consistent care when they return.
- 21.4 An early CiC Review may be convened to address issues for the child and placement.

22. Care Planning for Children who go missing from Care

22.1 Statutory Reviews will provide the opportunity to ensure that the care plan is amended to address reasons why the child was absent and the Independent Reviewing Officers will ensure that this includes a strategy to prevent re-occurrence. Where there is evidence that a child is vulnerable to sexual exploitation consideration must be given to convening a review to consider whether the placement is able to put in place a strategy to minimise risk to the child or whether an alternative placement needs to be sought to keep the child safe.

22.2 Suffolk CYPS ensures that all providers of fostering services and residential care have policies and procedures for when children go missing from their care placement which are compatible with these procedures.

22.3 Safeguarding Managers who conduct 'Regulation 33' visits to residential establishments will ensure that records of children being absent without authority or going missing are updated and that procedures for each child have been followed.

22.4 Chronologies will be kept up to date for children who repeatedly go missing to assist in identifying patterns of absence or concerns about care arrangements.

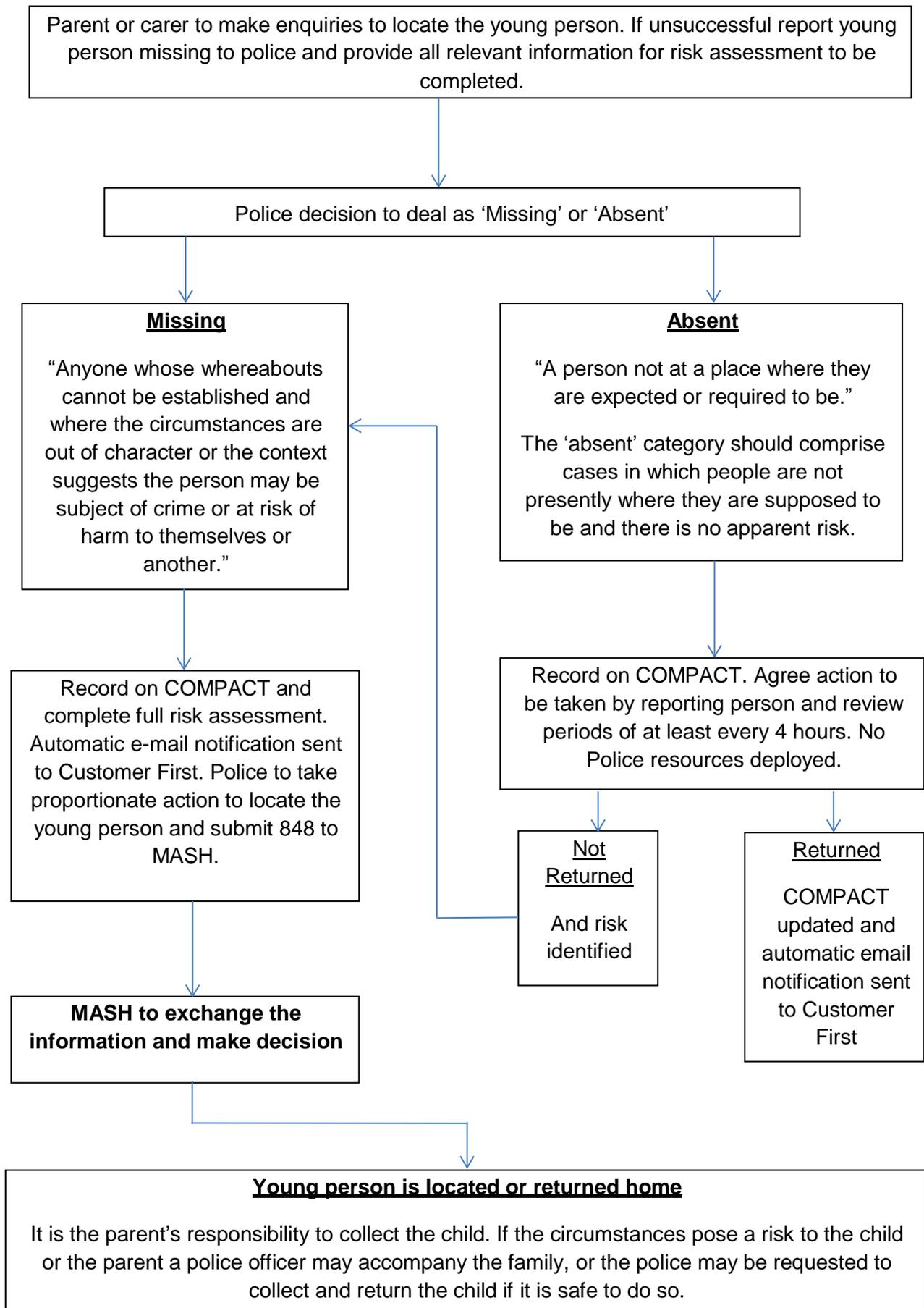
22.5 The children that are considered to be at the highest risk within the month will be subject of multi-agency review at the **Monthly Police –led Tactical & Tasking Co-ordination Group Meeting (TTCG)**.

22.6 Helplines and other advice information

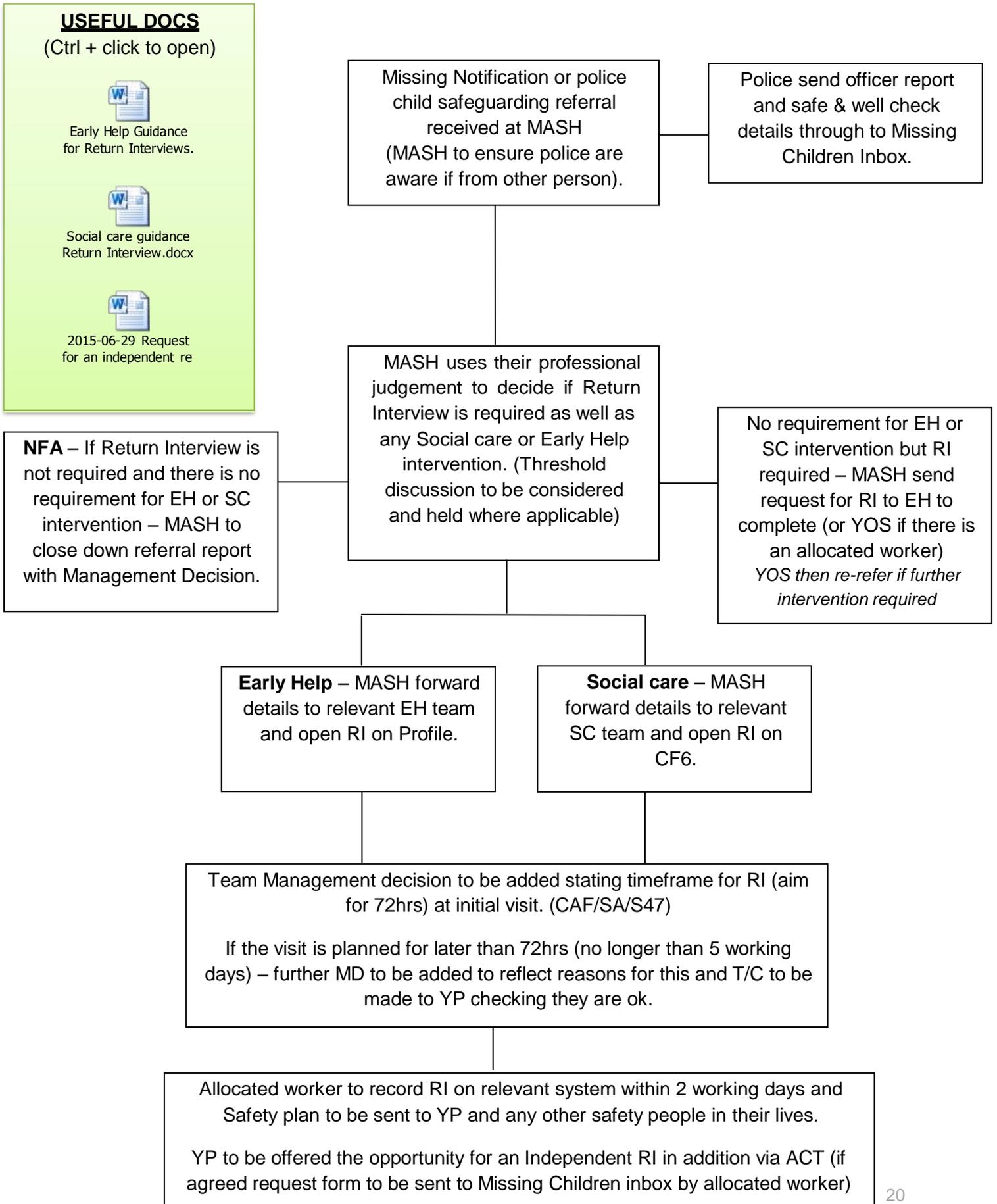
The [Missing People](#) charity provides crisis support to any young person who has run away from home or care, or been forced to leave through the **Runaway Helpline** contacted via **Freefone 0800 800 7070**

- [UK Missing Persons Bureau](#)
- [Ofsted, Missing children, February 2013](#)
- [Children who go missing from care: A participatory project with young people as peer interviewers, \(2012\), Taylor J., Rahilly T., and Hunter H., NSPCC](#)

Appendix 1: Young People Missing from Home Flowchart (Police)



Appendix 2: Missing from Home/Care Flowchart for New Cases (Early Help and Social Care)



Appendix 3: Missing from Home/Care Flowchart for Open Cases (Social Care)

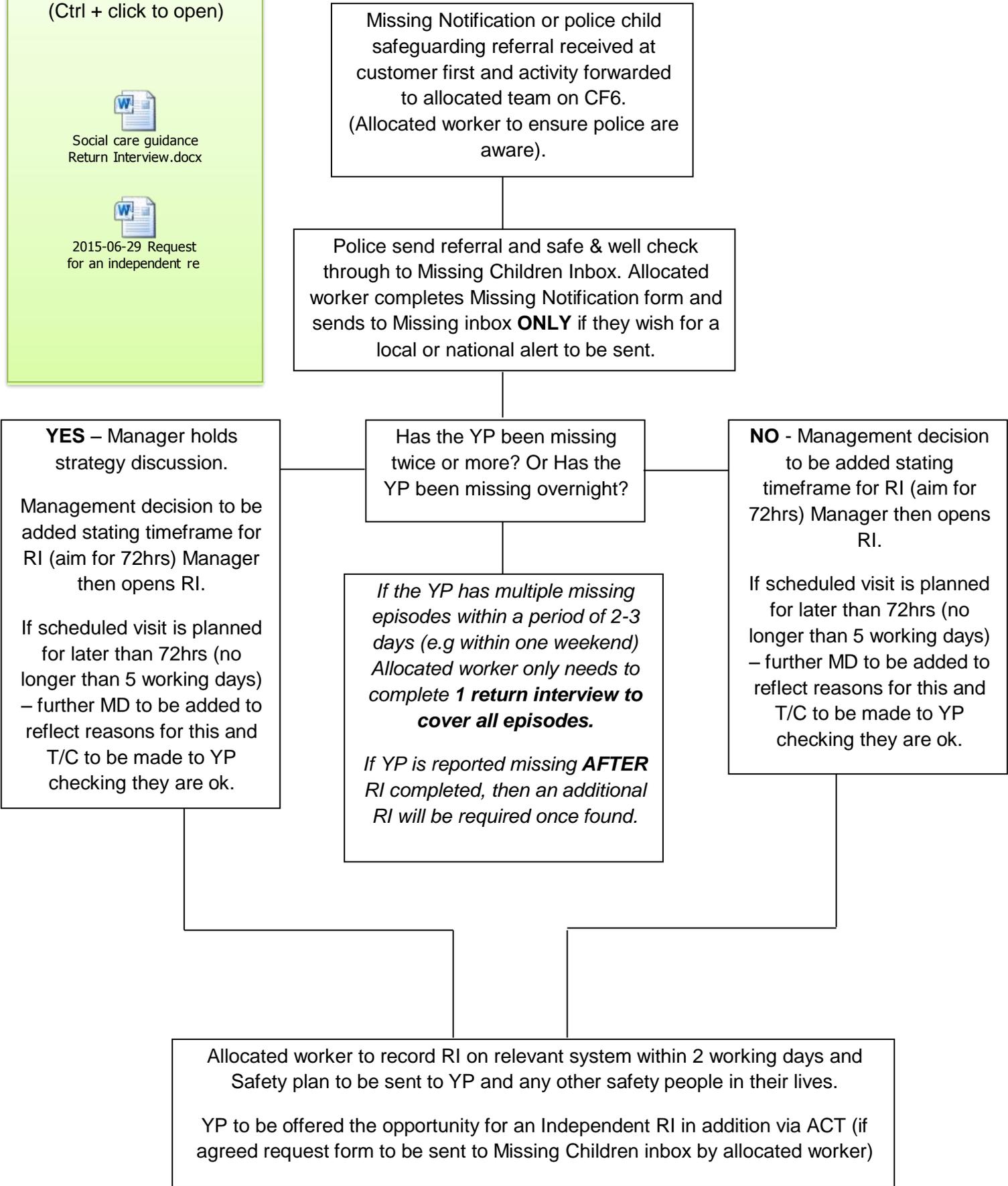
USEFUL DOCS
(Ctrl + click to open)



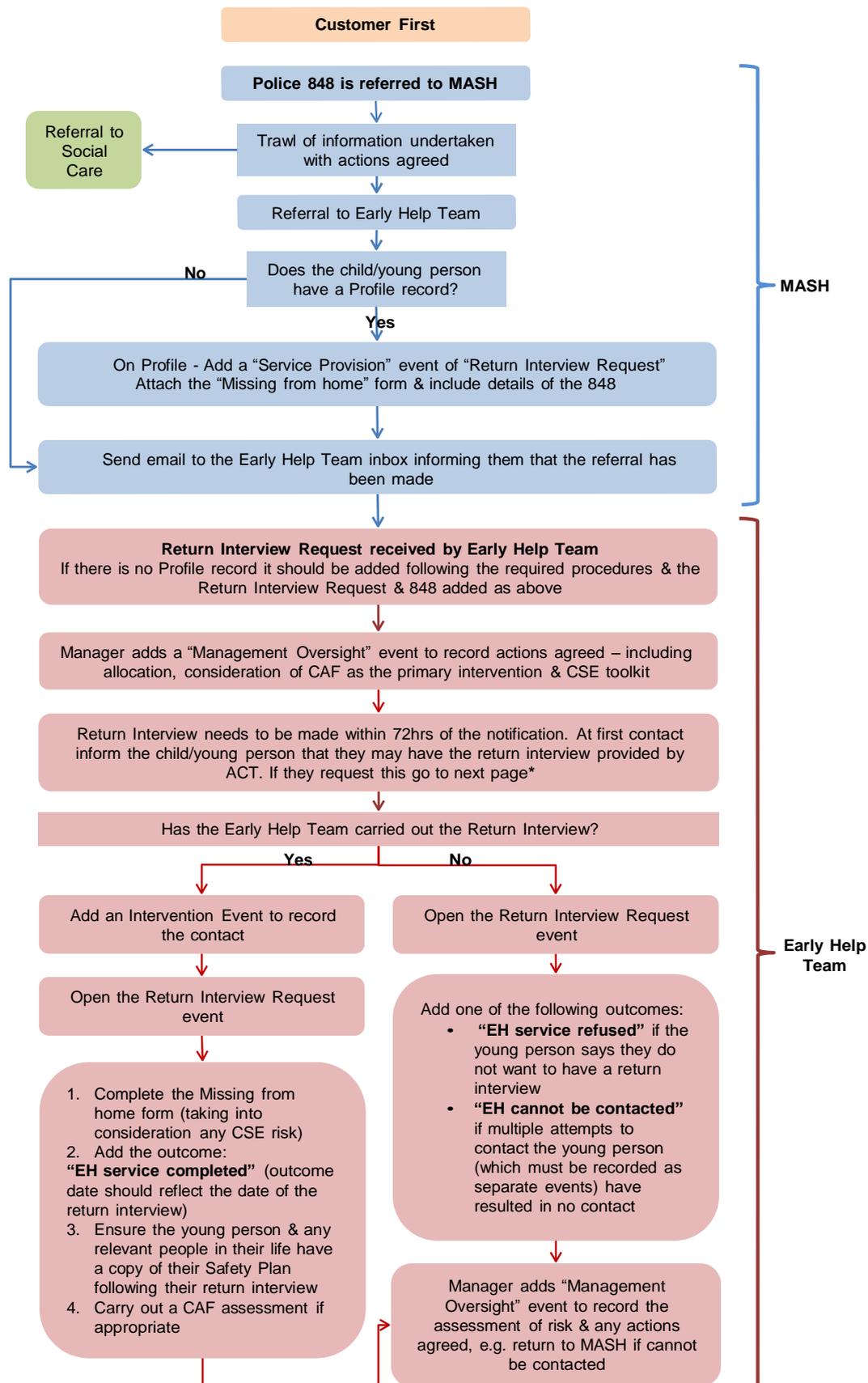
Social care guidance
Return Interview.docx



2015-06-29 Request
for an independent re



Appendix 4: Early Help Flowchart for Missing



* Referrals to ACT for Return Interviews

If the young person asks for the return interview to be provided by ACT you must first **gain their verbal consent** to pass on information regarding the missing episode to ACT.

Once you have gained consent you should record the following:
Return to the MASH Return Interview Request event and add the outcome **“EH refer to other service”**

Add a **new Service Provision Event of “Return Interview Request”**

- Link it to ACT via the Organisation field
- Record in the notes that you have gained verbal consent from the young person to share details of their missing episode with ACT and any other relevant information.
- Create the Return Interview Referral form and store it against this event

Send the Return Interview Referral form to the Missing Children Inbox where it will be picked up and forwarded to ACT

Early Help Team

Notifications from ACT regarding Return Interviews

Early Help Teams will be notified via the Team Inbox that ACT have undertaken the return interview – *if there has been no notification within 2 weeks the manager must email the Missing Children Inbox requesting information*

Has ACT carried out the Return Interview?

Yes

No

Open the ACT Return Interview Request event and add the outcome: **“EH service completed”** (outcome date should reflect the date of the return interview)

Open the ACT Return Interview Request event & add one of the following outcomes as appropriate:

- **“EH service refused”**
- **“EH cannot be contacted”**

Manager adds “Management Oversight” event to assess risk & record actions agreed

Appendix 5: Young People Missing from Care Process Flowchart

