



Missing from Care Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Between

Essex Police, Southend, Essex and Thurrock Childrens Social Care

and

Residential Care Home/16+ Supported Living Provider /Local
Authority Foster Care Provider/Independent Foster Care Provider
(Approved by Southend, Essex and Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Boards)

The purpose of this document is to set out the joint co-operation between care providers and police as supported by each Local Authority within the County of Essex in relation to children who are likely to go missing or have gone missing.

Compliance with this MOU is required as per the Southend, Essex, Thurrock (SET) procedures.

Providers may be subject of checks to ensure that requirements of this MOU are complied with.

Definition of Missing

Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered as missing until located and his or her well-being confirmed.

(College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice guidance)

Definition of a Child

A child is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday (SET Procedures).

Care Provider - Please complete a, b or c as relevant below:

a. NAME AND ADDRESS OF RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME:

(Please provide list of names of homes and addresses in the space provided at the back of this agreement)

b. NAME & ADDRESS OF 16+ SUPPORTED LIVING PROVIDER:

c. NAME & ADDRESS OF FOSTER CARER (LA or Independent Provider)

1. Introduction

Missing children are amongst the most vulnerable in our community.

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) sets out the partnership working relating to children who run away or go missing from care homes, 16+ supported living provisions, residential and foster placements.

By working together effectively, it will be possible to prevent or reduce the frequency of children running away from home or care. Consequently, children living in Essex will be safer.

This document should be read in conjunction with the Southend Essex and Thurrock (SET) Child Protection Procedures. It should also be read in conjunction with local guidance in relation to children who are missing, and those children whose whereabouts are known, albeit not authorised.

2. Placing Authority / Care Home Provider / 16+ Supported Living Provider / Foster Carer's Responsibilities:

- As soon as practicable the provider / carer should inform the Essex Police Missing Person Liaison Officer (MPLO) **of the placement** of any child *at risk of going missing*. If details are not known by the provider / carer, they are to obtain these from the social worker for the child.
- A child defined as *at risk of going missing* under the terms of this Memorandum of Understanding is a child with previous missing episodes and / or concerns in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation, Gangs, Criminal Exploitation, Trafficking, Honour Based Abuse, Forced Marriage, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Radicalisation. A child is also *at risk of going missing* if placed into the county of Essex by another Local Authority.
- Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) may be subject of trafficking offences in order to get into the UK. Once in the UK, they may be further trafficked and exploited. The sharing of information to police for all UASC placed in care is essential. Trafficking can be the movement, transportation, transfer or harbouring of children across continents, countries and borders for the purpose of exploitation of any kind. Trafficking can also be across counties, towns, or within a local area, for the purpose of exploitation. It is important to note that **any child** could be trafficked within the UK for the purpose of exploitation. It is important to hold in mind the possibility that your missing child might be at risk of trafficking.
- **The Childs Social Worker is to complete** a "Preparing for Missing" form (attached as Appendix A), if not before, then at the placement planning meeting, in conjunction with the placement provider. Once completed please send this by **secure email** to missingpersonliaisonofficers@essex.pnn.police.uk **and leave the live copy with the carer / care placement**. All personal and sensitive data must be processed in accordance with the requirements under the Data Protection Act 1998 and General Data Protection Regulations (EU) 2016/679. Each party is responsible for ensuring that their organisational and security measures protect the lawful use of information shared under this MOU. **This document should then be treated as a live document and any professional can update it with new relevant information. It will be the carer / care placements responsibly to ensure the most up to date report is at hand, should it be**

required.

- Any new relevant information or a change of risk to the child should be updated on the planning for missing form as and when they occur and the Missing Person Liaison Officer informed, this is a live document. Any additional friends and associates of the child should also be noted as well as being shared with the social worker.
- Completion of the Planning for Missing form is required for **all** children who are considered to be *at risk* of going missing including those placed in care from another Local Authority. The receiving authority and placing authority must, where possible, ensure this information is available.

3. When the Child goes missing:

- At a placement planning meeting the provider / carer, child and social worker will agree a time for them to be home after school / college and in the evenings / weekends. This will be done taking account of the child's age, level of understanding, development, vulnerability, and in light of known risks to the child.
- If the child does not return within the agreed time frame, the provider / carer is required to take active steps to locate the child e.g. searching the home or locality, making contact with the child by phone, text and social media and visiting or telephoning the child's friends, and unless reason not to, their family. If the provider / carer knows where the child is and there are assessed to be no known risks – for instance, the child is at the address of a known friend and is assessed to be genuinely running late – the provider / carer will agree a time with the child to return, or arrange to collect them. Unless there are health and safety reasons not to, the provider / carer will arrange with the child to go to the address and collect them, as would be the case if the child were the provider / carer's biological child. This must be completed where practicable prior to calling police. If a child is likely to be at an address where they may be at risk of harm from the occupants or others associated with the occupant, the police will be called and the assessment of risk explained.
- If the child is considered to be missing, the provider / carer is expected to then report the child missing to the police, they should provide information to the police informing of any checks already completed by them and any known risks around the missing episode. They will then provide the police with the most recent 'planning for missing form' by emailing it to - force.control@essex.police.uk. This information is important as it may save time and prevent duplication of tasks set by police, in order to locate a child.
- The provider / carer is expected to continue to look for the child and make enquiries to help locate the child whilst missing, keeping the police and social worker updated (and out of hours services where relevant). Any new information must be relayed to police as soon as possible, as this may lead to further enquiries that police can undertake.
- If it is thought that the child is at risk by being at a known place, or with an individual who may be putting that child at risk and there are concerns that the provider / carer

would be put at risk should they try and retrieve the child, then the police should be informed in order to act upon that information.

- Once the missing child has been reported to the police any new information should be communicated by the provider/ carer by telephoning 101 and quoting the incident number you will have been provided. This must be passed to police as soon as possible, as officers will continue to search for the child until informed of their return.

4. When the Child is found

When the child is found by the provider/ carer, or if the child returns of their own accord, the provider/ carer must notify the police immediately. The social worker (or out of hours service) must also be informed. Do not delay this action under any circumstances, as the child will remain classified as a missing person until seen, along with efforts from police to locate the child.

5. Essex Police

On receiving a report of a missing child, Essex Police will classify the child as missing.

Essex Police, in collaboration with the child's social worker or out of hour's service, will assess the level of risk faced by the child; this will be based on all of the available information.

- Essex Police will respond to missing children, based on the level of risk to the child and/or the level of risk the child poses to others.
- Essex Police will conduct a vulnerability interview for all children who have been missing and have returned. It may be that the child refuses to engage or speak with police. On these occasions the carer can assist by reporting to officers their observations on the child's return, e.g. did the child shower, have gifts, appear unwell or under the influence of any substance, etc.
- Each child that returns from missing will be offered an independent return from missing interview by a person not involved in their care. This will be facilitated by the Local Authority with responsibility for the child.
- Essex Police are to feedback to the placing authority any concerns they have about the Care Home Provider / 16+ Provider / Foster carer.

6. Care Planning and Review

If a child has an established pattern of absence it would be expected some form of intervention should take place. The provider/ carer should consider whether this pattern is an indicator of vulnerability and whether any action can be taken to mitigate the risk of further missing episodes. Remember to update the 'planning for missing' form with any patterns and suspected vulnerabilities.

7. Names and addresses of Children's Homes, 16+ Supported Living Provider or Foster Carers owned/managed by Organisation named on Page 1 of this Agreement (please list):

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8. Upon agreement to this MOU and Planning for Missing Form please state your name, position held and date of signature below and return by secure email to missingpersonliaisonofficers@essex.pnn.police.uk and the responsible local authority.

It is important that this information is handled correctly with due regard to the Data Protection Act and General Data Protection Regulations.

Should you have any further questions please email your query to the same email address and someone will be in contact with you.

Name:

Organisation:

Tel no:

Position Held:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix A

*****Planning for missing form***