**Briefing 4: Missing Children**

**Statement of Intent**

Brighton & Hove City Council recognises that young people missing from home, care or education face potentially multiple significant risk factors. As a Council and particularly co-ordinated by Children's services we wish to make the safety and well-being of missing children and young people our top priority for all responsible agencies and the City Council recognising the very serious risks posed to them.

Risks can include Physical Harm, sexual exploitation, substance misuse, poor impacts on health and well being and involvement in criminal activities. Such a wide range of risk factors rarely coalesce around a specific group of children as much as they do around missing children.

The following points represent the expectations we wish to set for this area of work:

* All agencies are therefore directed to work together to prevent, solve and follow-up on the problems behind children going missing from education, care and home;
* All relevant agencies, organisations and carers are required to use their professional judgement to take any action they feel is necessary to protect the safety of the child, based on an assessment of risk and to report concerns to the responsible agency. They are also required to share data and intelligence where doing so is likely to promote the safety of the child and children more widely;
* Staff in contact with the young person must actively seek to understand their circumstances and experiences which are triggering missing episodes.

In Brighton & Hove we have developed a comprehensive policy on Missing Children which you can read by clicking on the link:

<http://brighton.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_missing_children.html>

The Policy is based on the Statutory Guidance on Children Who Run Away Or Go Missing From Home Or Care (Jan 2014) and it provides for a joined up approach, with Practice Leads for the following;

[Children Missing from Home](http://brighton.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_missing_home.html)

[Children Missing from Care](http://brighton.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_missing_care.html)

[Children Missing from Education](http://brighton.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_missing_education.html)

The Practice Leads are responsible for the operational oversight for their particular cohort of children and young people, achieved via notification systems and monthly Missing Panels.

There is a communication protocol between the 3 Panels to ensure effective sharing of information and a recognition that a child missing from home or care is also likely to be a child missing from education. Those children identified as at risk of significant harm due to their missing behaviour are referred to the multi-agency Vulnerable Children’s Liaison Group which is tasked with developing a plan that addresses the identified need and reduces risk.

Strategic oversight of Missing Children is provided via a Single Point of Contact (SPOC), a role that is fulfilled by the Head of Safeguarding. The SPOC holds bi-monthly meetings with the 3 PLs to review missing data and responses to identified themes and issues.

**Key Relevant National Guidance & Policy** *Please click on the links*

[Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care January 2014](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/298718/statutory_guidance_missing_from_care.pdf)

[Working Together 2013](http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/w/working%20together.pdf)

[Statutory guidance for local authorities in England to identify children not receiving a suitable education 2009](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https:/www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/STATUTORY-LA-GUIDE)

[Young Runaways – Report by the social exclusion unit (November 2002)](http://www.bristol-cyps.org.uk/socialcare/procedures/childprotection/pdf/young-runaways-report.pdf)

[UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](http://www.unicef.org.uk/unicefs-work/our-mission/un-convention/)

For further information or to request copies of these briefings please contact the Children’s Services Service Development Officer on 01273 293736 or [Carolyn.bristow@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:Carolyn.bristow@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

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