

# Missing Children Multi-Agency Strategy 2013-14

Working Together to Safeguard Children going Missing from  
Home & Care in Nottinghamshire



**Nottinghamshire**  
**SAFEGUARDING**  
**CHILDREN Board**

# Statement of Intent

Children who go missing from home and care are an extremely vulnerable group of children and young people. It is estimated that nationally every year there are approximately 240,000 notifications of children going missing which relate to approximately 140,000 children. Within Nottinghamshire in 2012/13 there were 1440 missing notifications which related to 776 individual children.

Missing children is a safeguarding issue as, whilst the majority of children who go missing return quickly, many others will either be at risk of or suffer harm in the form of physical abuse or sexual exploitation. They may sleep rough or commit crimes to survive and their physical and emotional health may suffer as well as their general health, education and social relationships. There are also links between going missing, being sexually exploited and trafficking.

From research there are many reasons why children go missing from home or care often referred to as push-pull factors; for example they may be pushed away from home or pulled towards something. Children who go missing from care are an especially vulnerable group of children, 21% of the individual numbers of children who went missing within Nottinghamshire in 2012-13 were from care and 79% were from home.

***We will develop an effective local strategy to ensure a co-ordinated multi-agency response to children going missing from home or care.***

It is our clear intent to contribute to improving the lives of children living in Nottinghamshire both within home and care. We will do so by ensuring children and young people understand the risks of going missing and of being exploited. This will lead to better outcomes for children and young people.

This strategy and action plan is based on *Missing Children and Adults: A cross Government Strategy* (Home Office 2011) and on the Statutory Guidance on children who run away and go missing from home or care (DfCSF 2009) as well as the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board (NSCB) Inter-agency Practice Guidance *Children Who Go Missing from Home, Care or Education Protocol* (May 2011) and the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) 'Report from the Joint Enquiry into Children who go missing from care' (July 2012). It will be updated as required in line with developments from central government and policy, practice or research.

The strategy covers children of all ages that are reported missing to the police and meets the criteria within the protocol.

## The strategy for 2012-2014 has an emphasis on:

- Prevention: Reducing the number of children who go missing
- Protection: Reducing the risk of harm to those who go missing
- Provision: Providing missing children & families with support and Guidance

Our key strategic priorities are:

- Mapping data and needs in relation to levels of missing children
- Putting systems in place to effectively respond to children who go missing
- To offer children who go missing a return interview in a timely manner (in line with the *missing protocol*)
- Increase understanding & awareness of missing children issues among children, their parents and carers as well as with professionals
- Ensure a multi-agency response to meeting the needs of children and young people who go missing

## How we will achieve our priorities?

There is a strategic service manager lead for missing children within NCC as well as a dedicated police manager.

A multi-agency missing children steering group will meet regularly to monitor and progress strategy and planning taking into account new legislation, research, policy or guidance.

Strategic planning and working in a multi-agency way will enable us to work collaboratively, consistently, and effectively to improve the lives of children and young people at risk of harm from going missing from home or care.

The missing children steering group will:

- Take a strategic lead in the co-ordination of children who go missing
- Scrutinise performance taking a robust approach to data collation and analysis to inform practice.
- Drive forward and support the multi-agency work that needs to be done to tackle missing children

The work of the group will report to the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board (NSCB) Performance and Quality Sub-Group. Elected members will also be updated annually.



Prevention	
What are we going to do?	How will we do it?
Ensure that there are clear policies and processes to support the work of responding to missing children.	Through the provision of cross-authority inter-agency practice guidance and standards to professionals involved in responding to missing notifications. There is also Nottinghamshire practice guidance available for staff.
Have an understanding of the 'picture' and context of 'missing' in Nottinghamshire and whether there are locations or venues which are high risk and where children are regularly going missing.	The police and local authority will collate and share data which will be analysed to identify hot spots which will then be targeted and shared as appropriate with partner agencies.
Develop a better understanding of the reasons why children and young people run away and go missing from home and care.	By the use of data collated from return interviews to try and understand the reasons why children go missing from home or care and consider if a strategic response is required.  Through the use of available research to develop a complete picture of missing and to identify actions and practices for tackling missing in a preventative and early intervention way.
Ensure that colleagues working with, or in contact with, children understand missing children issues to support them in developing intervention strategies to prevent escalation.	Through multi-agency training and development to ensure staff have sufficient awareness of missing children issues.
Ensure that colleagues working with, or in contact with children who go missing, understand the impact children may suffer upon their physical and emotional health.	Through multi-agency training and development to ensure staff have sufficient awareness of the possible impacts on physical and emotional health and awareness of the services available.
Offer support to schools to deliver an education package to the children and young people of Nottinghamshire designed to heighten awareness and reduce risk taking.	Develop and deliver a package of training resources for young people.
Encourage schools to access and deliver CEOP Thinkuknow	Engage with schools to raise awareness of the CEOP training

training.	resources.
<p>Improve connectivity with both the local authority &amp; private provider residential sector and fostering services to ensure that there are policies and practice to minimise the likelihood of children going missing and respond appropriately when they do.</p> <p>Endeavour to support foster carers and residential staff in their understanding of what they can do to make running away less likely.</p>	<p>Include the residential and fostering service in policy and practice development and in training.</p> <p>By sharing information from the Ofsted report 'Running Away' 2012 away with colleagues. We will share children's views about the need to be listened to, to have understanding about why they go missing, to feel supported, to feel cared about and their need to be supported by help to sort out their problems.</p> <p>Through an emphasis on missing children within the LAC strategy.</p> <p>Take on board the messages from the APPG inquiry into children missing from care (2012)</p>
<p>We will ensure that the link between going missing and child sexual exploitation (CSE) is well known and understood.</p>	<p>Emphasise the link within our policies, procedures, training and awareness raising and ensure that those who undertake return interviews are aware.</p> <p>Ensure there is a clear remit within the Missing Children multi-agency steering group to maintain the link to CSE.</p> <p>The strategic lead within social care has responsibility for both missing children and CSE and the Police Manager also has links to both.</p> <p>CSE is a priority area within the NSCB action plan for 2012-13 and is an issue subject to a cross-authority group.</p>

<b>Protection</b>	
<b>What are we going to do?</b>	<b>How are we going to do it?</b>
We have a multi-agency co-ordinated approach to missing children.	We will do this through our partnership working at a strategic level i.e. through the work of the missing children steering group and at a practical and operational level to information sharing and planning at multi-agency meetings.
Information sharing is a critical factor in correctly identifying vulnerability and in ensuring that children are found quickly.	Agencies will share information and intelligence with each other to assist in the rapid location of young people.
The police will inform the Local Authority of all missing children notifications and subsequent found notifications. The police will respond robustly in investigating missing children.	Automatic missing and found notifications will be sent to Children's Social Care who will screen them.  The police will make efforts to locate missing children using available information and intelligence and using a robust risk assessment model.
Using the information and data gathered from return interview at a strategic level we will endeavour to better understand the reasons why children and young people run away and go missing from home.	We will use this information to respond on an individual level to the young person by seeking appropriate support.  We will use this data to review any trends and these to inform service provision.
We will intervene at an early stage of a child or young person going missing to attempt to reduce the risk of them going missing again and to reduce the harm they may suffer if they go missing again.	Children will be offered a return interview either the first time they go missing if the concerns are significant or otherwise they will be offered a return interview on the second and subsequent missing occasions. Multi-agency meetings, co-ordinated by the social worker or targeted support worker will also be held as per the criteria to enable a co-ordinated response.  We will identify children at risk of going missing at an early stage to enable an assessment of their needs through the completion of a return interview to then enable appropriate support and

	<p>intervention to reduce the factors which will cause the young person to remain in a risky situation.</p> <p>Through multi-agency meetings we will seek the commitment of all agencies to work with the young person and their family to agree plans of support to address, for example physical and emotional and emotional health issues identified or educational issues or any other specific need.</p> <p>Where appropriate safeguarding procedures will be followed.</p> <p>The police will lead in the use of disruption strategies as appropriate</p>
We will ensure that there is a robust approach to completing return interviews and multi-agency meetings.	We will robustly monitor and track compliance of the undertaking of return interviews and multi-agency meetings.
Information and data will be collected and reported on regularly to ensure that there is oversight of the 'problem' and response.	<p>Regular reporting will be undertaken and shared with partners at the missing children steering group and the Performance &amp; Quality Sub-Group to enable scrutiny and governance.</p> <p>A performance framework and management information data set will be developed with the support of analysts.</p>
We will ensure that we seek national support through the Missing Person's Bureau and CEOP to review cases where appropriate.	The Police lead officers will access this resource as required.



Provision	
What are we going to do?	How are we going to do it?
We will ensure that services to young people and families are of a high standard and that safety and well being remain paramount.	<p>We will ensure that young people receive a service in a timely manner.</p> <p>We will ensure that young people and their family receive a supportive and effective service or that they are signposted to the appropriate service.</p> <p>We will audit cases to ensure that the quality of the work is good.</p>

# Missing Children Multi-Agency ACTION PLAN 2013-14

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## Overarching strategy and governance

### Responsibility

There will be an effective local strategy to ensure there is a co-ordinated multi-agency response to children missing from home and care based on a robust, thorough risk assessment of the extent and nature of missing children locally. The work on missing will be monitored through the Missing Children Steering Group and ultimately by the Performance & Quality Sub-Group of the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board. .

Action	Lead	Timescale	Progress to date	Rag Rating
a) Complete a Strategy Document	Terri Johnson		Complete	
b) Complete an Action Plan	Terri Johnson	June 2013	Complete	
c) Complete revised terms of Reference for the cross-authority group	Terri Johnson		Complete	
d) Update the cross-authority protocol to reflect national policy and practice	Terri Johnson		Awaiting the DfE revised guidance.	
e) The APPG inquiry for Runaways to be absorbed.	Terri Johnson		Partially done - ongoing.	

# 1. Prevention

## Reduce the number of children going missing

The ambition is to protect and prevent children from going missing. We need to reduce the number of children going missing and to have effective prevention strategies, education work and early intervention by agencies in repeat cases. This will help to reduce the vulnerability and likelihood of vulnerable children going missing and reduce the number of repeat cases.

Action	Lead	Timescale	Progress to date	Rag Rating
1.1 Establish effective communication channels between NSCB and partner agencies to share information and training	Terri Johnson  Missing Children steering group	Ongoing	A multi-agency steering group meets quarterly  Training within 2011/12 & 2012/13 has been undertaken. Training for 2013/14 is planned and missing issues are regularly raised at NSCB 'What's New'. Visits to teams are undertaken and a session at the Schools 'Designated Person's' Forum has been done in 12/13.	
1.2 To provide current inter-agency practice guidance.	Terri Johnson Viv McCrossen (City) Emma Adams (Police)		As per (d) awaiting the DfE revised guidance.	
1.3 To develop LA practice guidance (PPG)	Terri Johnson		This has been signed off at OMT is on Tri-Ex.	
1.4 Establish an effective independent service to respond to missing notifications for those	Terri Johnson		The service is now up and running, the contract is monitored quarterly. The effectiveness is currently subject to	

children who do not have a social worker or other statutory worker.  1.4.1 Monitor compliance with RI & MAM requirements and timeliness.	Denis McCarthy		challenge and scrutiny and issues about performance have been escalated to the TSS.	
1.5 Children who have a social worker or statutory worker will receive a return interview and associated support in line with the protocol.  1.5.1 Monitor compliance with RI & MAM requirements and timeliness.	Terri Johnson  Carl Riley	Ongoing	Compliance has improved year on year but there is still room for improvement. Work with the LAC team has been undertaken and other teams need to be re-visited.  Escalation to team manager is done on a monthly basis.	
1.6 To develop a clear preventative strategy for engaging with schools and young people and for this to be reported on quarterly.	Denis McCarthy		The TSS have been requested to report on this through the contract meeting. More connectivity between this strategically and operationally is planned.  This work is unlikely to develop any further at present due to vacancies.	
1.6.1 To absorb the Children's Society report 'Lessons to Learn' looking at the link between running away and absence.	Terri Johnson  Denis McCarthy	Meeting in diary for Sept.	Mtg required to evaluate work needed.	
1.7 To engage with private providers (fostering and residential) to raise awareness of the missing children inter-agency practice guidance and for this to be reported on quarterly.	Terri Johnson  Service Manager Placements		Specific training was provided in 2011 and again in 2013 to private providers.  Private providers linked to the LA have references to missing within their contract and notify the LA when they have children placed.  Further training via the NSCB will be provided once the DfE Statutory Guidance	

			and the Protocol have been revised.	
1.8 To share information with fostering and residential staff (LA and PP) on ways to reduce the risk of missing children including the views of children.			This work needs to be formalised and build on previous training and engagement. A training event for later in the year is planned.	
1.9 To reflect missing children and CSE in the LA LAC strategy.	Terri Johnson		There is already a brief reference to missing children but consideration needs to be given to this being more explicit when it is next revised.	
1.10 To ensure that children who are placed out of the county receive the same response to instances of going missing.  1.11 The CMO will be notified of all children placed outside of Nottinghamshire.	Terri Johnson  Service Manager Placements  Service Manager IRO	October 2013	The Placements team alerts the CMO to all placements out of the County. Liaison occurs with other LA to try and ensure that any missing events are notified. This remains a challenge as OLA's and police forces often have very different processes and points of contact. There is reference to missing within the placement contracts. The LAC team are required to alert the CMO of any missing event.  Continue engagement with the IRO's.  Need to arrange a meeting with placements, LAC and safeguarding to formalise practice.	
1.12 To seek to facilitate OLA children within Nottinghamshire access to a return interview from their placing authorities			Extensive work has been undertaken to try and engage with OLA's and other police forces but this has been a challenge.  TSS have begun to offer return interviews to OLA's. This will be implemented and kept under review.	

## 2. Protection

Reduce the risk of harm caused to those who go missing

It is important to understand the scale and nature of the problem and there should be systems in place to monitor the prevalence and response to it. It is vital that once professionals are aware of notifications of missing that there are clear and robust systems in place.

Action	Lead	Timescale	Progress to date	Rag Rating
2.1 The police will routinely inform the LA of all missing notifications and found	Emma Adams		There are effective systems in place for this to happen although a new police computer system has disrupted this.	
2.1.1 The Police will apply a risk model to children who are reported missing.	Emma Adams		This system is in place.	
2.2 The CMO will screen all notifications on a daily basis	Terri Johnson		This system is in place	
2.3 The CMO will monitor and track compliance with the requirement for a RI or MAM	Terri Johnson		This system is in place	
2.4 Map the levels of missing and related data within the Police & NCC. The Police will share monthly data.  NCC will produce monthly, quarterly and annual reports	Terri Johnson  Emma Adams  Jon Ward	October 2013	Some data is already reported on and work has been undertaken to develop a new module within the client record system as well as a suite of reports developed which will lead to more comprehensive reporting and analysis.	
2.5 A performance management framework to be developed to enable better accountability.	Jon Ward Data Team  Terri J	November 2013	A brief has been provided to the analyst – this needs to go back to the steering group in October.	

2.6 Data should be routinely analysed to ensure that 'hot spots' are responded to.	Terri Johnson Emma Adams	October 2013	This is happening on an informal basis but this could be done in a more co-ordinated multi-agency way.	
2.7 The Police to actively lead on the use of disruption techniques  2.7.1 To monitor the frequency and use of disruption strategies through the use of quarterly reporting.	Emma Adams	October	This is not currently reported on to the steering group – this should be reported on and included in the quarterly reports.  Annually for the 2012-13 the numbers were low.	



### 3. Provision

Provide missing children and their families with support and guidance

Vulnerable children and their families have a right to understand how and where to access support and guidance to minimise anxiety and distress at difficult times.

Action	Lead	Timescale	Progress to date	Rag Rating
3.1 Return interviews and multi-agency meetings to be held in a timely manner. Reported on a quarterly basis.	Terri Johnson		This is being reported on.	
3.2 Auditing of cases will be undertaken to ascertain the quality of the response to the young person and their family to include the voice of the young person.	Terri Johnson	January 2014	An audit has been commissioned under the NSCB which will take place in November and will report in January. This will include a sample of young people being spoken to.	

## 4 Public Confidence

Engage with local communities to raise awareness of Missing Children and how it affects individuals and communities.

Communities will be enabled to understand what the scale of the problems is and how it impacts on them individually or as a whole community.

Action	Lead	Timescale	Progress to date	Rag Rating
4.1 Sign up to Children's Society Missing Children Charter			Completed	
4.2 Sign up to the Barnardos 'Cut Them Free' Campaign'			Completed	
4.3 Regular reporting to Elected Members on work in relation to missing children.			Commenced and in progress	