



Telford & Wrekin
COUNCIL

MISSING CHILDREN PROCESSES FOR TELFORD AND WREKIN.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

Introduction

Purpose of document

Background

Objectives.

Missing C&YP procedures in T&W

Relevant young people

Missing C&YP process

Criteria for Return Interviews

Police Safe and well check

Children Missing from Education

Children missing from Home/Care Return discussion guidance

Return Interview

General discussion suggestions to aid return interview

Questions to consider

Procedural reference

Appendices

- 1 Missing Notification
- 2 Found Notification
- 3 Criteria for Return Interview
- 4 1 or 2 missing episodes pathway for C&YP KNOWN to services
- 5 Pathway for missing episodes of 3 or more
- 6 1 or 2 missing episodes pathway for C&YP NOT KNOWN to services
- 7 Pathway for missing episodes of 3 or more
- 8 Initial missing persons letter
- 9 Young person feedback form

Additional papers.

- 1 Return Home Interview Template
- 2 Return Home Interview Guidance

Glossary

SAS	Safeguarding Advisory Service
C&YP	Children and Young People
MAW	Multi Agency Worker
EI	Early Intervention
F&CS	Family and Cohesion Service
YP	Young Person
SW	Social Worker
CM	Case Manager
CRM	Case Record Management
YOS	Youth Offending Service
CATE	Children Abused Through Exploitation
Allocated Worker	Social Worker
	Case Manager
	Youth Offending Service
	Targeted Youth Support CATE

Introduction.

Purpose of the document.

The purpose of this document is to describe the processes involved in working with young people in Telford and Wrekin who have gone missing. This should be used as the overall Framework for undertaking this work. This document will outline the processes from the initial police Missing/Found Notifications to the Return interview and proposals for further intervention.

Background.

This is a statutory requirement for Telford and Wrekin and will be monitored by the Local safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) along with actions as identified by the Sub Group for missing Children. This document is local guidance based upon the West Mercia Joint Protocol for Missing Children 2011.

Objectives.

To enable staff to be clear about their own responsibilities regarding missing children as part of this process.

To enable a process of recording and monitoring.

To enable reporting, to ensure that we meet the statutory requirement of holding a Return Interview within 72 hours of the missing episode.

To identify, as early as possible, those young people and families who are in need of services following a Return Interview.

To provide a Pathway to services for Early Intervention or Cohesion.

To hold workers, teams and agencies to account when working together within this process.

MISSING PERSONS PROCEDURES IN TELFORD & WREKIN.

This document should be read alongside the West Mercia Joint Protocol for Missing Persons as agreed by all 4 West Mercia Authorities.

The following document concerns internal procedures for Telford and Wrekin which explain how young people who go missing are to be dealt with through their journey of going missing; being located and the local authorities response to these missing episodes.

Relevant young people:

- Young people placed in care by Telford and Wrekin who remain within Telford and Wrekin.
- Young people who live within Telford and Wrekin but reside with family, live independently or are care leavers.

Missing persons falling outside of this process include:

- **Young people placed within Telford and Wrekin by another local authority.**
In these circumstances the home authority Social Worker will be notified of this missing episode and it is then their responsibility to undertake the Return Interview. In some circumstances the home authority may ask for assistance to undertake this Return Interview and these requests will be managed on a case by case basis.
- **Young people placed outside of the Telford and Wrekin area by Telford and Wrekin.**
In these situations T&W authority will have agreed and identified the relevant process for missing episodes in whatever authority and whichever establishment the T&W young person resides. The relevant Social Worker will then need to expedite a Return Interview within 72hrs or agree with the host authority and establishment how this will be achieved.

MISSING CHILDREN PROCESS

In Telford and Wrekin when a Young Person is reported as missing from care or home the police will complete a Missing and then a subsequent Found Notification and these notifications get emailed to FAMILY CONNECT.

familyconnect@telford.gov.uk

(See appendix 1 and 2) for Notifications.

Upon receipt of these Notifications in Family Connect:

- If the child is open to a Social Worker this notification will be forwarded to ChildProtection@telford.gov.uk in order for this to be recorded onto Protocol. As well as being forwarded to the relevant social worker and their manager to action appropriately.
- If open to locality services the notification will be sent to the relevant worker and their manager to action appropriately.
- If the young person is not known the case will be recorded onto the Family Connect CRM database.
- If after investigation by Family Connect, of all relevant systems, the **young person is not known** to the local authority, they are assessed by the attending Triage staff to ascertain the most appropriate way forward for this individual episode.

In order to agree a way forward the Triage will:

REMEMBER THAT

Reported incidents are not always as they seem

CHECK INVESTIGATE DECISION

The Joint Protocol has adopted the Children's Society criteria for return interviews so this has been applied in terms of a threshold for young people missing in Telford and Wrekin. The missing for 24hrs will not be applied at this stage.

The relevant criteria are that:

- The child has been missing on 2 or more occasions
- The child has engaged or is believed to have engaged in criminal activities
- The child has been hurt or harmed whilst they have been missing or this is believed
- The child has mental health issues
- The child lives in a household where there are mental health, child protection, domestic abuse and/or substance misuse issues
- The child is at risk of or thought to be at risk of sexual exploitation
- The child has had contact with persons posing a risk to children, including boyfriends/girlfriends/partners that are more than two years older than the young person.
(See appendix 3)

If the child is open then **“The Pathway for missing children who are known”** should be followed from this point (See Appendix 4+5)

And

If the child is open then **“The Pathway for missing children who are not known”** should be followed from this point (See Appendix 6+7)

The initial outcomes of the information gathering and assessment process of the case could be:

- If this is the first missing episode for this young person an “Initial missing letter” should normally be sent by Family Connect. (Appendix 8)
- If after assessing all of the gathered information the concerns are such that it is felt necessary to visit on this first occasion then it is necessary to follow the return interview Pathway. (See Children Society Criteria for relevant concerns.)
- If this is the second or more episodes on going missing then the relevant Pathway **should** to be followed.

Depending upon the agreed Pathway/process the Family Connect Advisor will enter onto CRM that an outcome has been made i.e. passed to another team/worker.

If the young person or family is open to Social care

The Family Connect Advisor will email the Notifications to ChildProtection@telford.gov.uk

the relevant Social Worker and cc their Team Manager. This is in order for the notifications to be recorded on Protocol, the case to be dealt with by the Social Worker, and in their absence allocated by the Team Manager for another worker to complete the return interview, within 72 hours.

If the Social Worker is unable to complete the return interview within the allotted 72hrs they must discuss this with their Team Manager and agree how this can be achieved. This may be to request assistance from other workers or teams including Early Intervention or Family and Cohesion Services.

There is a Return Interview template to assist in this process. It is very important that upon completion of the Return Interview that confirmation of this is sent to Family Connect in order for that particular episode to be closed on CRM. If the worker fails to complete the Interview in the allotted 72hrs the worker will receive a reminder via CRM’s automated system. A confirmation reply from this email is required in order to prevent continued emails from CRM about this Return Interview.

If the young person or family is open to locality services

The Family Connect Advisor will email all of the gathered information including Notifications to the relevant Case Manager immediately and cc the Group Manager. This is in order for the case to be dealt with by the case manager, and in their

absence allocated by the Group Manager for another worker to complete the return interview, within 72 hours. If the worker is unable to complete the return interview within the allotted 72hrs they must discuss this with their Team Manager and agree how this can be achieved. This may be to request assistance from other workers or teams including Early Intervention or Family and Cohesion Services.

There is a Return Interview template to assist in this process. It is very important that upon completion of the Return Interview that confirmation of this is sent to Family Connect in order for that particular episode to be closed on CRM. If the worker fails to complete the Interview in the allotted 72hrs the worker will receive a reminder via CRM's automated system. A confirmation reply from this email is required in order to prevent continued emails from CRM about this Return Interview.

If the young person or family is unknown to locality services or closed to social care

These cases will be passed by the Family Connect Advisor into the Triage process. If it is assessed within Family Connect Triage that a return interview is required the relevant Triage manager (Early Intervention or Cohesion) will refer to the relevant Group manager/Team Leader for allocation.

Upon receipt of the notification/information the Group Manager/Team Leader will ensure that the parent/carer of the young person is contacted in order to discuss with them an opportunity to visit and speak to the young person, the parent/carer within 72 hours. If the young person is aged 16+ it will need to be decided if Parent/carer should be contacted first.

They will inform the parent/carer that it is usual for an independent person to be in contact with every young person who goes missing on more than one occasion, upon their return home in order to ascertain the reasons for going missing and to ensure issues of safeguarding are addressed.

The parent/carer may also have received a missing notification letter on a previous occasion already so may recall that it will say "any future episodes of going missing may result in you being contacted by the Local authority and may lead to a return interview being suggested".

It will also be useful to request the option of seeing the young person at school or other education facility if parent/carer is happy with this. Not being at home or in any care setting might mean the young person is happier to speak openly to someone acting as an independent person.

Before seeing the young person it is likely that the Police will already have carried out a Safe and Well check as the young person has returned home. On occasions if the young person is a Looked After Child the police will rely on information provided by the carer and forego a Safe and well check on this basis.

Police Safe and Well Check

'A Police Safe and Well Check is carried out as soon as possible after the person has returned. Its purpose is to check for any indications that the young person has suffered harm, where and with whom they have been, and to give them an opportunity to disclose any offending by or against them.

Where a person goes missing frequently, it may not be practicable to see them every time they return. In these cases a reasonable decision should be taken with regard to the frequency of such checks. This will mainly apply to young people missing from care who are likely to have other key people responsible for their welfare to check this. Every effort should be made to visit those young people missing from home on every occasion.'

There are processes to follow as the Young person goes missing more frequently which includes Return Interviews and strategic meetings to progress the case and identify appropriate action plans to reduce the level of missing episodes. (See Appendix 4 onwards).

If the Return Interview is not undertaken.

There will be some cases in which it is felt by the case manager and manager that a return interview is not required for whatever reason. It is very important in these cases that both the case manager and manager have a discussion about this and confirm that no return interview is going to take place. If this is the decision of the manager it is important that the CRM generated email reminding of the return interview is responded to in order to confirm this decision and by whom and also to allow CRM to complete the case therefore preventing the need to send continued reminders.

CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION PROVISION

Children going missing from school during the school day.

This relates to young people going missing on their way to, or going missing from school it does not involve young people who are failing to attend for any other reason.

- When a child goes missing on their way to school there should be clear procedures in place to follow up on their whereabouts. This should include robust registration procedures so that at the earliest opportunity parents/carers can be informed at once should their child not turn up at school. The school should have relevant contact numbers and be contacting these should registration be completed and a child not be in school. Registers should always be up to date and each child's attendance recorded accurately. This includes and is especially important during afternoon registration.
- Ensure that there are specific procedures in place for pupils who are deemed to fall into the high risk /vulnerable category.
- The school should also have in place robust late reporting systems and follow these in accordance with agreed procedures that parents are routinely informed of and can have access to should the need arise. This protects the school and the parents.
- If a child goes missing or is not where they should be during the school day every effort should be made to locate them before notifying parents/carers of their being missing. This could include school staff and trusted older pupils or hosts at the school in appropriate cases.
- The Police would not normally record or investigate reports of absences that are clearly truanting incidents. Each case will need to be assessed on its presenting risks and /or whether this is out of character for the pupil.
- If a pupil goes missing the school need to identify the appropriate person to contact parents/carers and this person will need to agree with the parent who is the most appropriate person to be notifying the police to report the pupil as missing. This will usually be the parent, however, if it is felt that concerns related to the home situation then the school should also be contacting the police to report the incident.
- All school staff should be aware of these procedures and follow them rigorously to ensure the safety of school pupils whilst also enhancing the expectations and reputations of the school.
- All pupils should be reported to the police as missing by the end of the school day if not located AND the school have been unable to contact the parents/carers.
- If you are not sure if a child should be reported to the police as missing then telephone them for advice.

Procedural Reference.

Police Notifications to Family Connect (FC)			
NO	Process	WHO	Procedure
1	Missing child Notification received from Police.	FC	<p>FC receives automated email from police Compact system to inform them a C&YP has gone missing. This is screened and checked on Protocol/EI/Cohesion/CRM systems.</p> <p>If open to social care the notification will be sent to ChildProtection@telford.gov.uk</p> <p>And relevant social worker and their manager.</p> <p>If open to locality services the notification is sent to the allocated worker and manager.</p>
2	Found Notification received from police	FC	<p>FC receives automated email from police Compact system to inform them a C&YP has been found/returned. This is screened and checked on Protocol/EI/Cohesion/CRM systems.</p> <p>If known to the system the allocated worker and manager will be notified by email. If open to social care email to .</p> <p>If not known the ChildProtection@telford.gov.uk info will be discussed in FC triage for appropriate referral.</p>
FC emails Triage manager consideration			
1	Email received from FC to Triage manager re: Found Notification.	Attending Triage Manager	<p>FC to check details of notification. Discuss with Triage and explore systems for information.</p> <p>If known a locality worker – email the worker to inform of missing episode – copying in Group Manager.</p> <p>Assess information gathered to identify next step.</p> <p>If not known, Triage discussion re next step to be Missing Letter or allocation to EI or F&C.</p> <p>Email including Notifications to be sent to relevant EI or Cohesion Group manager/Team Leader requesting</p>

			<p>allocation for Return Interview</p> <p>If 1st episode of missing send missing letter.</p> <p>If 1st episode but additional concerns consider processing to return interview.</p> <p>If second or more episodes of missing continue to return interview.</p>
Triage manager Emails relevant person			
1	Email received from Family Connect Triage requesting the undertaking of a return interview with the attached police Notification.	Allocated worker/	<p>If not in work manager will re allocate.</p> <p>Upon receipt begin to action in order to complete Return Interview within 72 hours of missing episode.</p> <p>Contact parent/carer/yp.</p> <p>Agree time and place for Return Interview.</p> <p>Request seeing C&YP alone.</p> <p>Note: this is probably the 2nd plus episode.</p> <p>Locate relevant missing children documents and read to familiarise yourself.</p> <p>Print and take a copy of return Interview form for signing.</p> <p>Follow missing children document processes.</p> <p>After Interview ensure all documents are completed and forwarded to identified person.</p> <p>If any further intervention required discuss with your manager for allocation.</p> <p>Record as required.</p>
2	Email received from FC Triage requesting the allocated worker to undertake a return interview with the attached police Notification	Manager	<p>If the allocated worker is absent and unable to complete the Return Interview within 72 hours you will need to re allocate this to another worker.</p> <p>If necessary please contact EI or F&C services to assist.</p> <p>If open to SW it will be important to follow this up at next meeting and to record on relevant documents placement records.</p>
FC Triage Email to Team/Group Manager for unallocated case.			
1	Email received from FC Triage requesting allocation for worker to undertake a return	Group Manager Team Leader	<p>Upon receipt consider allocation to appropriate worker in order to complete within 72 hours of missing episode.</p> <p>Allocated worker to be informed of the</p>

	interview with the attached police Notification		<p>need to: Contact parent/carer/YP. Agree time and place for Return Interview. Request seeing C&YP alone. Note: this is probably the 2nd plus episode. Locate relevant missing children documents and read to familiarise yourself. Print and take a copy of return Interview form for signing. Follow missing children document processes. After Interview ensure all documents are completed and forwarded to identified person. If any further intervention required discuss with your manager for allocation. Record as required.</p>
Completed information forwarded			
1	Information received from completed Return Interviews	FC	FC to update CRM with details received from return Interview.
2	Information received from completed Return Interviews	F&C Team Leader Admin	Scan onto Child File if known. Open Child file for C&YP if unknown and scan Return Interview document into it. Open Spreadsheet for Return interview completions.
3	Information received from C&YP feedback form following Return Interview	F&C Team Leader Admin	Scan onto Child File if known. Open Child file for C&YP if unknown and scan Feedback document into it. Add details onto Spreadsheet for Return interview completions.

Appendix 1

COMPACT Missing Person Notification from West Mercia Police

Pnc ID : **07/1586717Y**
Police Ref : **MPFDIV/882/12**
Case Ref No :
Station Code : **22FA**
Report Date : **25/04/2012 18:59:00**
Status : **M**
Officer Dealing : **HASLAM, PS1303: 03003333000**
M P Last Name :
M P First Name :
M P Middle Name :
M P House Name : **DINTHILL**
M P House Number :
M P Street :
M P Locality : **FORD**
M P Town : **SHREWSBURY**
M P County :
M P Post Code :
M P Country :
M P Dob : **24/12/1995 00:00:00**
M P Age Approx : **16**
M P Gender Code : **F**
Date Last Seen : **25/04/2012 11:30:00**
R A Code : **NotSet**
Informant Last Name : **MARCH**
Informant First Name :
Informant Relationship : **CARER**
Informant House Name : **DINTHILL**
Informant House Number :
Informant Street :
Informant District : **FORD**
Informant Town : **SHREWSBURY**
Informant County :
Informant Postcode :
Informant Country :
Informant Phone : **0456234123**
Local Authority Code : **16**
Previously Missing : **Y**

No Times Previously Missing : **28**

Child Services Notified :

Accommodation Type : **Social Services Care**

Ethnicity : **WHITE - NORTH EUROPEAN**

Build : **Slim**

Hair Colour : **red**

Height : **178**

Marks : **N**

Scars : **N**

Tattoos : **N**

Application Ref : **41621**

Circumstances : **OIS 0564-S -250412 *ABSCOND
CARE* LAST SEEN AT 1130 HOURS
AT COMMUNITY CENTRE.
SHE JUMPED OUT OF CAR AND
RAN OFF WITH HER BOYFRIEND,
..... THEY RAN OFF ACROSS
THE RAILWAY LINES TOWARDS
TELFORD TOWN CENTRE.**

Appendix 2

Local Authority Found Notification

This email has been sent automatically due to a found report being filled in for the misper.

Case Number : **MPFDIV/882/12**
Surname :
Forenames :
Date of Birth : **24/12/1995**
Circumstances : **MISPER WAS WITH HER BOYFRIEND, SHE WAS FOUND BY POLICE, AND THEN SHREWSBURY OFFICERS TOOK HER TO A NEW home.**

Case Papers held at : **22 G DIVISION**
Photograph Available : **Yes**
Publicity Authorised : **No**
Home Address : **DINTHILL, FORD, SHREWSBURY,**
Address Where Found : **12 welsh rd**
Informant Name : **PC 457 BLAXALL**
Informant's Contact No. : **03003333000**
Informant's Address : **WEST MERCIA CONSTABULARY,
POLI, VICTORIA ROAD,
WELLINGTON, Telford,
SHROPSHIRE, TF1 1LQ**

Found Report Date/Time : **25/04/2012 22:00:00**
Distance found from home : **11 - 20 MILES
: 20 MILES.**

Found by : **POLICE**
:
Found how : **PRESENTED TO POLICE**
Found where : **STREET / PUBLIC PLACE**
:
Transport provided : **POLICE**
Time missing : **0 - 8 HOURS**
Suffered harm : **No**
: **NO TYPE OF HARM SPECIFIED**

Committed crime : **No**
: **NO TYPE OF CRIME SPECIFIED**

Reason(s) for missing : **OTHER REASON(S) NOT COVERED**
Reason details : **ABSCONDED TO BE WITH HER BOYFRIEND.**

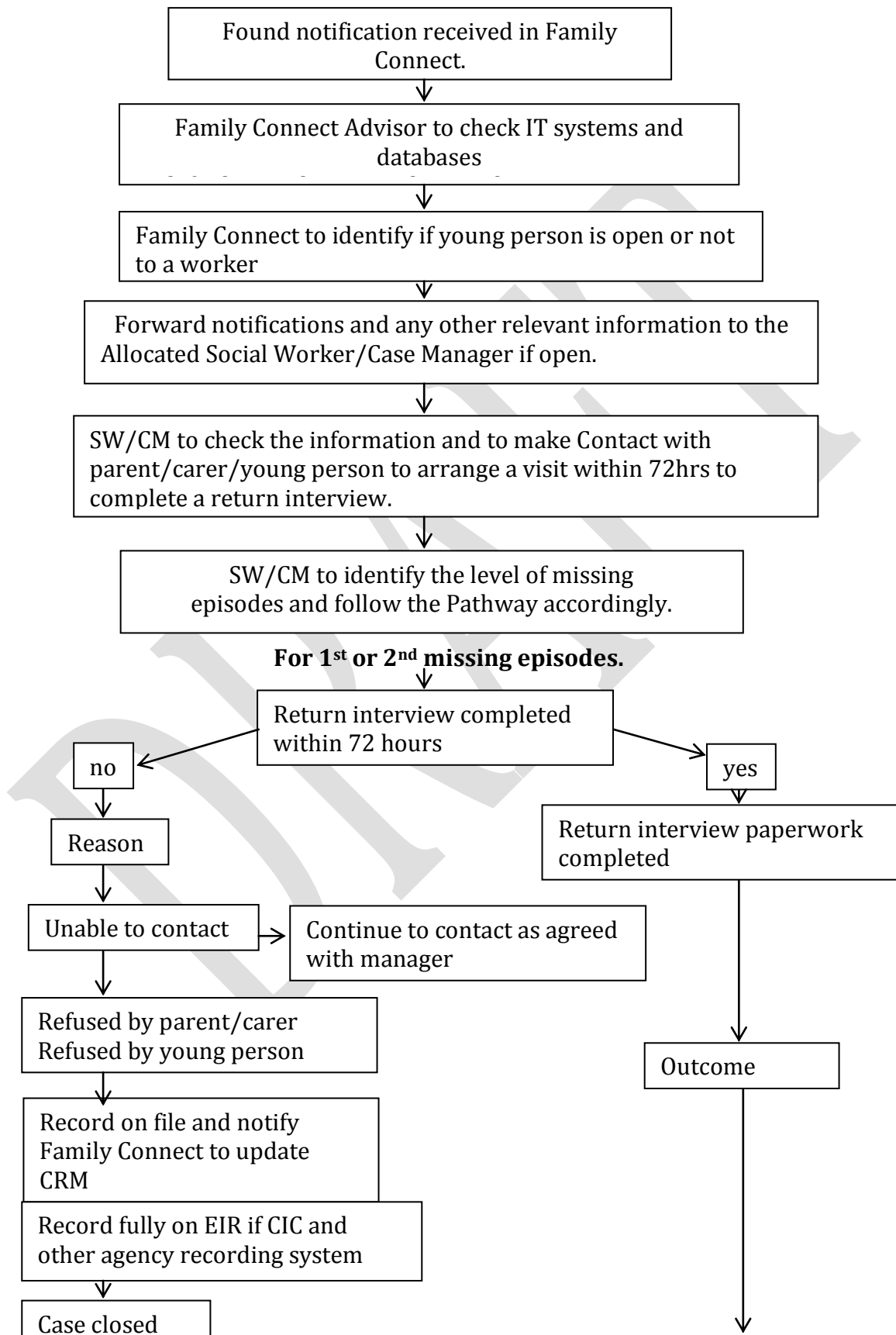
Appendix 3

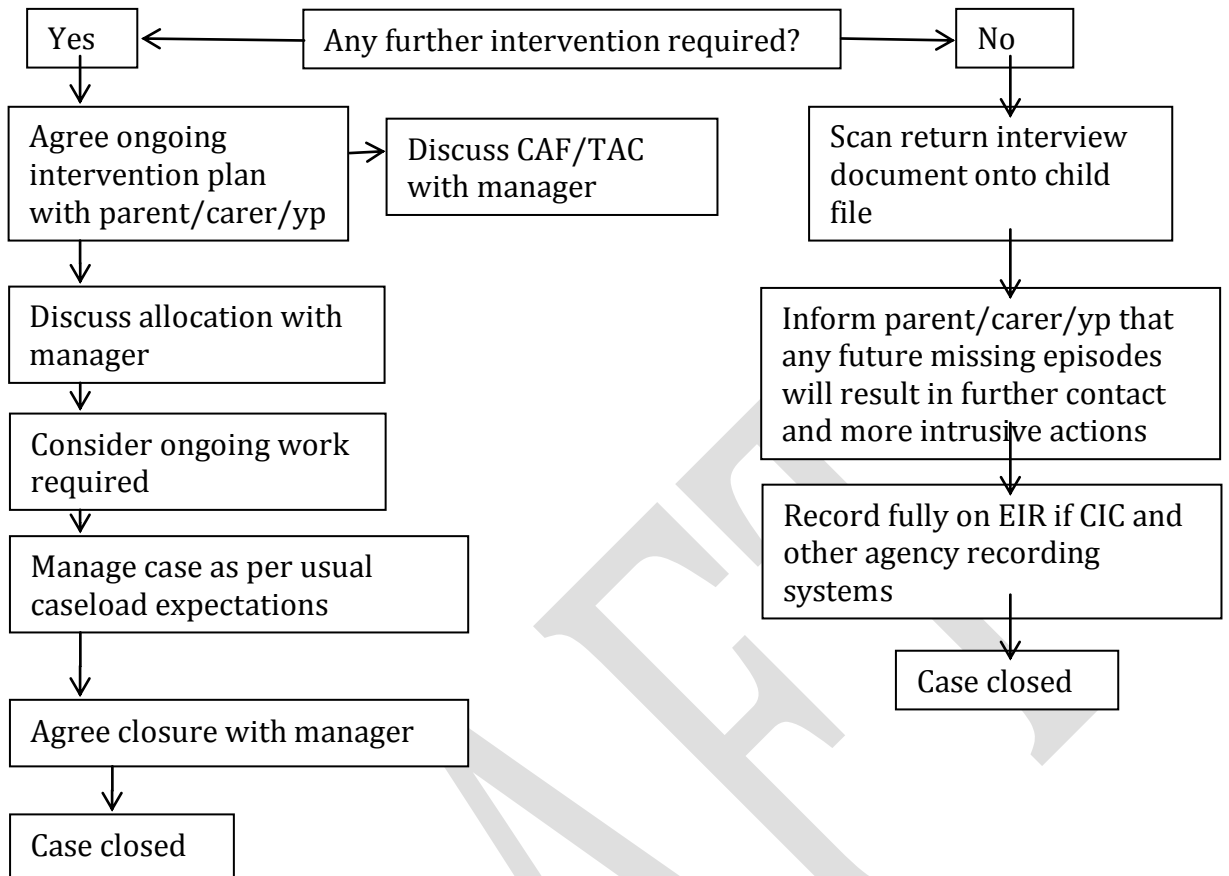
The Children's Society has applied the following criteria for return interviews:

- The child has been missing for 24hrs
- The child has been missing on 2 or more occasions
- The child has engaged or is believed to have engaged in criminal activities
- The child has been hurt or harmed whilst they have been missing or this is believed
- The child has mental health issues
- The child lives in a household where there are mental health, child protection, domestic abuse and/or substance misuse issues
- The child is at risk of or thought to be at risk of sexual exploitation
- The child has had contact with persons posing a risk to children, including boyfriends/girlfriends/partners that are more than two years older than the young person.
- In addition it is recommended that a Return interview should take place if there are other factors that a professional judge requires the child or young person to be seen.

Appendix 4

1 or 2 MISSING EPISODES PATHWAY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE OPEN TO SERVICES.

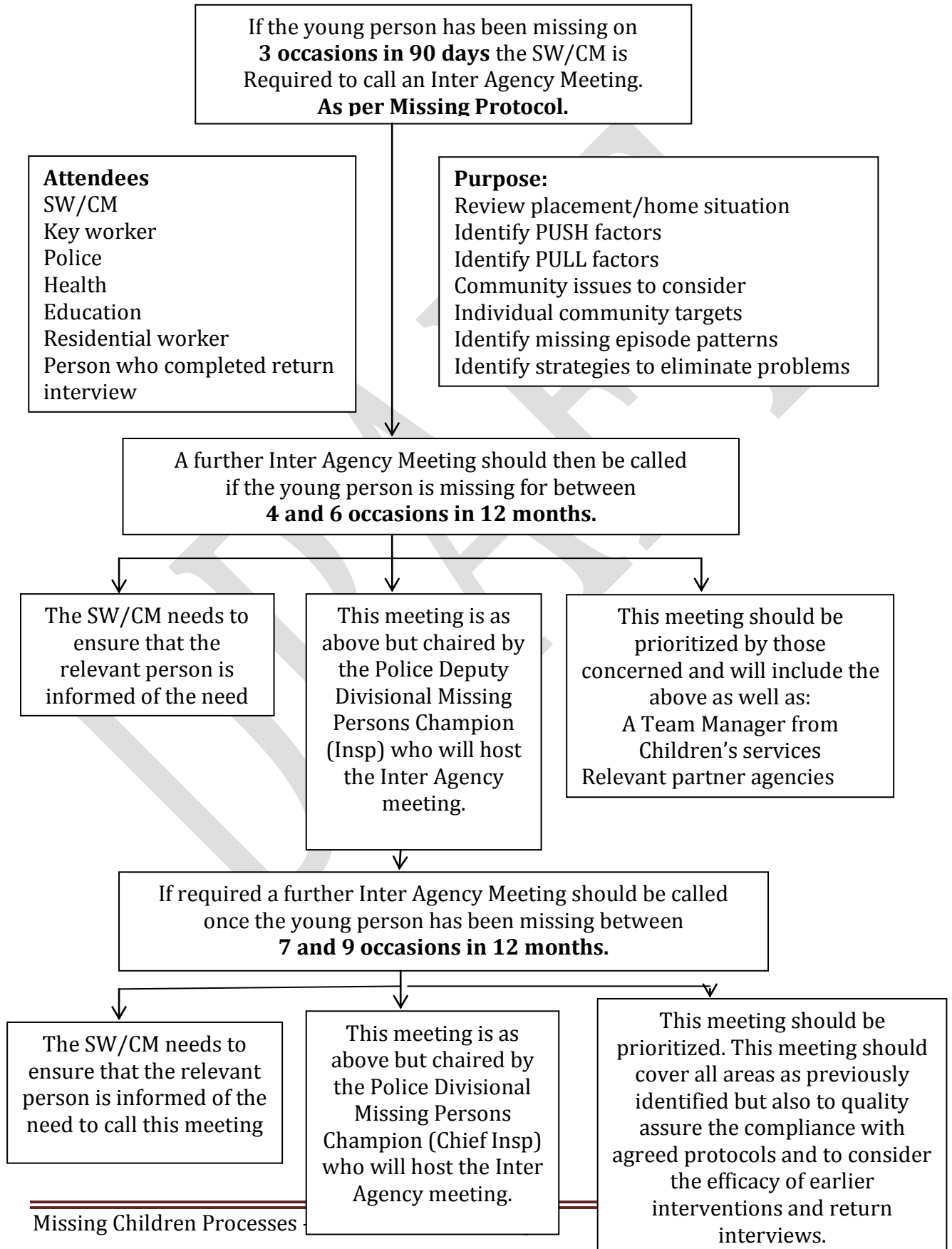




FOR MISSING EPISODES OF MORE THAN 2 FOLLOW 3 OR MORE MISSING EPISODES PATHWAY

Appendix 5

FOR MISSING EPISODES OF 3 OR MORE



The outcome of this meeting should also to agree a report to be forwarded to the Force missing persons strategic lead.



If missing episodes continue beyond this level then consideration should be made to the appropriateness of intervention from the Assistant Chief Constable.

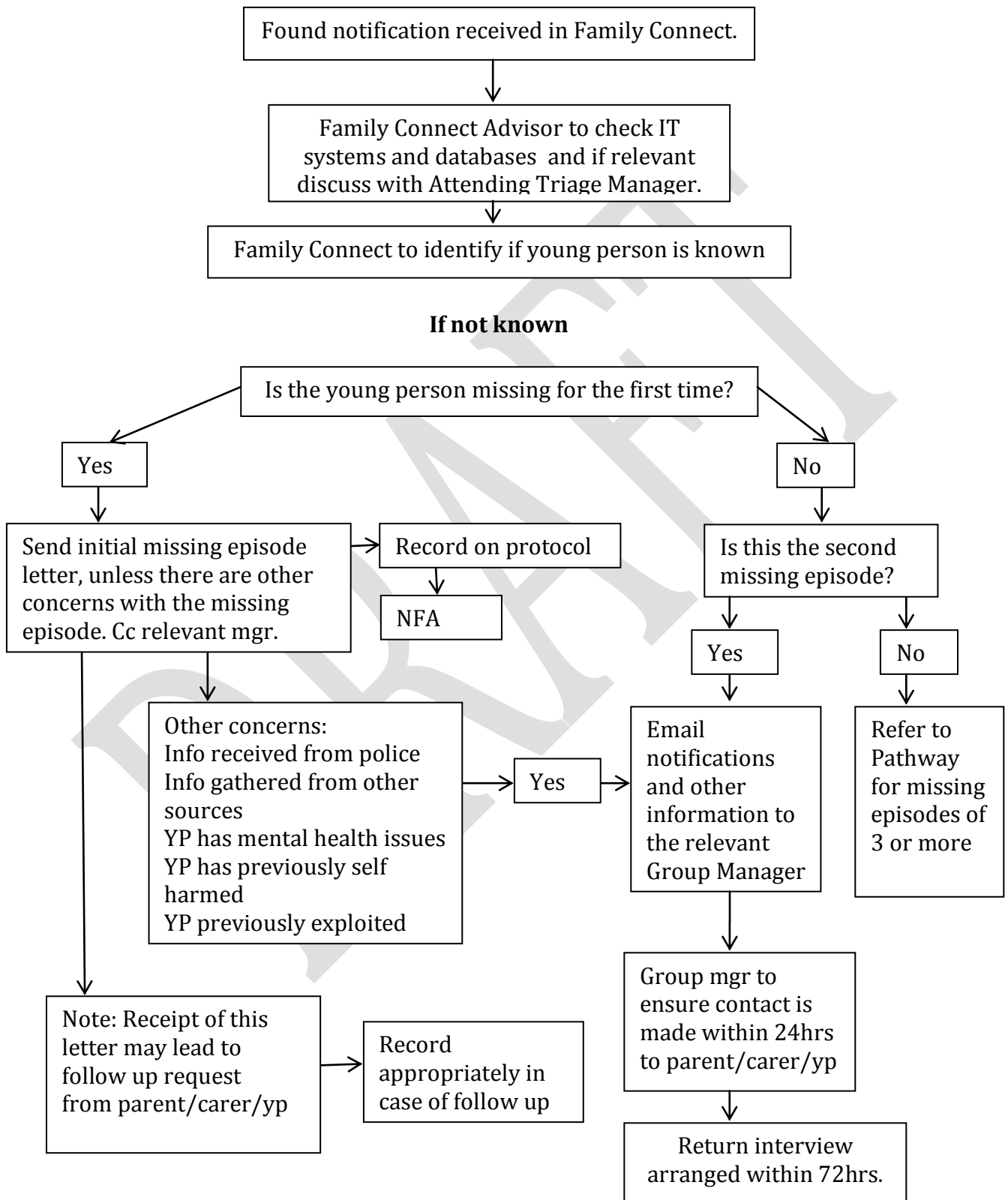


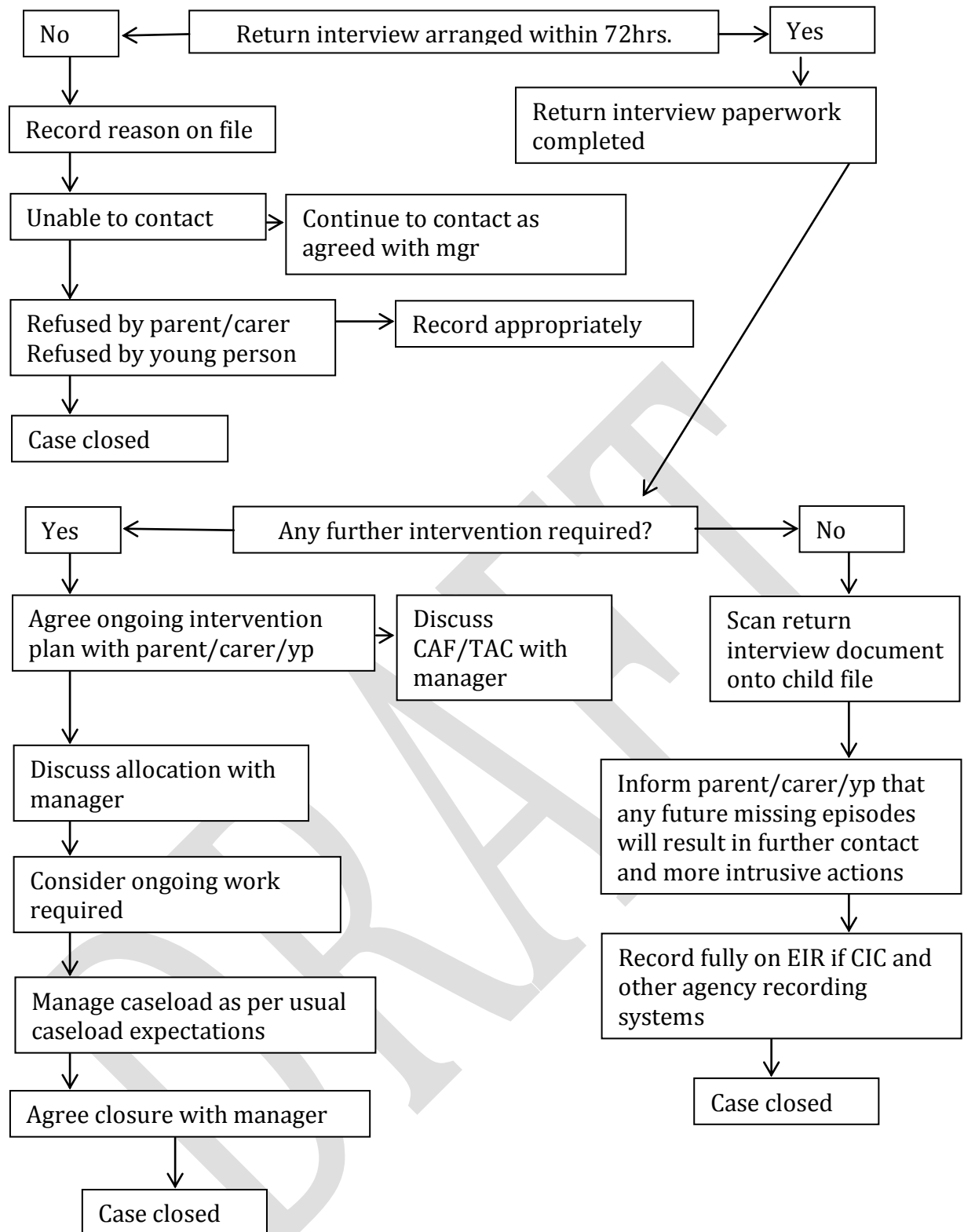
This should also be considered where:

- Any cases where the risks involved in a single future episode are **Very High**.
- Cases where it has been identified that **Immediate** action is necessary to ensure the well being of the person.

Appendix 6

1 or 2 MISSING EPISODES PATHWAY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE NOT OPEN TO SERVICES.

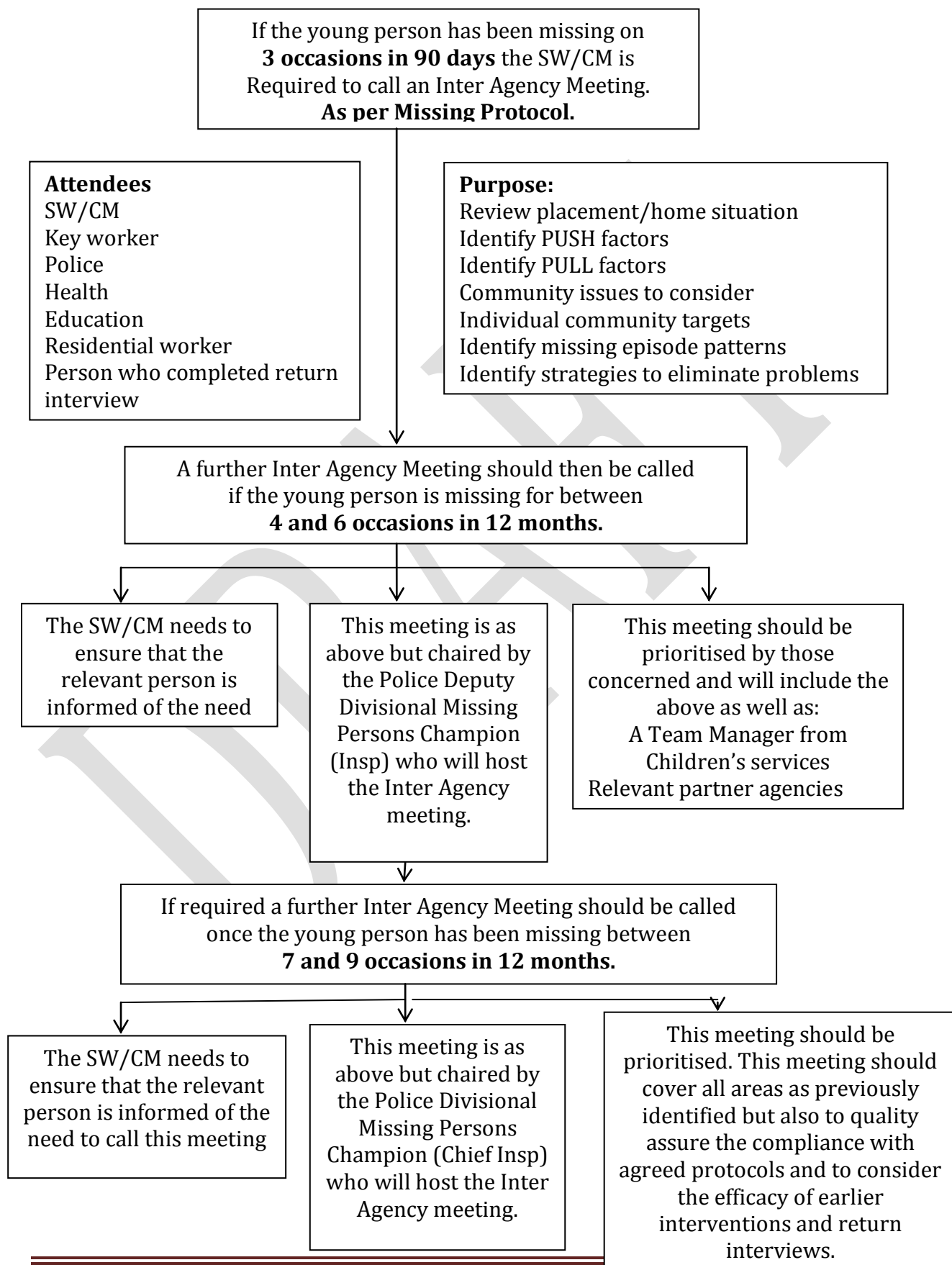




FOR MISSING EPISODES OF MORE THAN 2 FOLLOW 3 OR MORE MISSING EPISODES PATHWAY

Appendix 7

FOR MISSING EPISODES OF 3 OR MORE



The outcome of this meeting should also to agree a report to be forwarded to the Force missing persons strategic lead.



If missing episodes continue beyond this level then consideration should be made to the appropriateness of intervention from the Assistant Chief Constable.



This should also be considered where:

- Any cases where the risks involved in a single future episode are **Very High**.
- Cases where it has been identified that **Immediate** action is necessary to ensure the well being of the person.

FOR MISSING EPISODES OF MORE THAN 2 FOLLOW 3 OR MORE MISSING EPISODES PATHWAY

Appendix 9
(TO BE ELABORATED)

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PERSONS FEEDBACK FORM FOLLOWING DISCUSSION RE
POST MISSING EPISODE.**

Name:

Address:

Please circle:

Were you happy discussing information with the independent visitor? YES NO

Did they treat you sensitively and with respect? YES NO

Did you find talking to them helpful? YES NO

Is there anything else that you wish to ask or say?



Telford & Wrekin

C O U N C I L

RETURN HOME

INTERVIEW

TEMPLATE

RETURN HOME INTERVIEW

- This form should be used for all relevant young people missing from home or care
- The interview should take place within 72 hours of the missing episode
- The return interview should be undertaken by the appropriate case worker or where deemed necessary, an independent person.

Name of YP:	DOB:
Living with parents: Y N	Ethnicity:
Child in Care: Y N	Home Authority:
Address missing from:	Address located if relevant:

You need to inform the C&YP that:

".. if during your discussion they disclose an incident whereby either they or another C&YP was harmed or are at risk of harm, or that a criminal offence has been committed, that you have a duty to disclose this matter to other social service professionals and/or the police."

Are you happy to continue on that basis?	If YES Please tick:
--	---------------------

If No then please get the C&YP to sign here indicating that the option has been given. If the C&YP refuses to discuss the matter then the interview can go no further. Please note why they have refused.	Signature of C&YP:
If C&YP has refused to continue the discussion please get parent/carer to sign indicating this also. If they are present. Note refusal.	Signature of parent/carer:

If the young person is happy to continue and you consider the C&YP to be fit and healthy, both physically and emotionally then proceed. If you have other concerns

about the ability of the young person to complete the interview now then make these known and address them.

The following areas should be discussed with the parent/carer/young person and recorded as fully as possible.

Relevant information discussed with parent/carer.
Can I please discuss with you, why did you leave?
Where did you go? Why?
Who were you with? Who did you see?
What did you do whilst missing?

Did anything happen to concern us whilst you were missing?

Did you witness anything that you want to talk about?

Did you do anything illegal or that would concern us whilst you were missing?

What needs to happen for this not to happen again? Is it inevitable?

What do you do in your spare/free time?

Would you be interested in joining a club or local youth group?

Would it help you to talk to me again or someone else to prevent the need to go missing any more?

OUTCOME OF INTERVIEW:

If after meeting with the young person and/or their parents you have any immediate Safeguarding concerns contact FAMILY CONNECT at the earliest opportunity on 01952 385385 Or contact your Team Manager for advice to agree a way forward.
No further contact required. Please tick:
Further investigation needed. Please tick: What needs looking at further:
Referral to other services. Please tick: Referral to:
If further intervention is needed please outline what this needs to be, who needs to do it and how YOU will ensure this gets completed:

Date of Return Interview:

Name of worker completing the interview: Printed and signed:
Position of worker completing the interview:
Team and/or agency of worker completing the interview:

Once this form is completed please forward to Sarah-jane.ballantyne@telford.gov.uk for recording/monitoring. ALSO REPLY TO EMAIL FROM FAMILY CONNECT CONFIRMING COMPLETION OF THE RETURN INTERVIEW INCLUDING THE DATE AND PERSON COMPLETING THIS.
--



Telford & Wrekin

C O U N C I L

***RETURN HOME
INTERVIEW
GUIDANCE***

CHILDREN MISSING FROM HOME/CARE.

RETURN DISCUSSION GUIDANCE.

This document is to be used as an aide to the return home interview. It is a guide to accompany the Return Home Interview paperwork.

The overall purpose of the Return Home interview is to ascertain the views of, and to assess the Health and safety of, Children and Young People (C&YP) who go missing. This can be from care, those living at home with their parents or those living independently in Telford and Wrekin.

It can also be used to identify any imminent/immediate concerns as well as events that are likely to happen that need to be addressed.

As the allocated person in this process you will need to complete the relevant factual information detailed in the return Interview form. This should be gathered from the parent or carer, including a description of their thoughts and concerns about the fact that the C&YP has gone missing.

Discussion with the parent/carer is also to identify any issues that could arise through the discussion with the C&YP that may be sensitive or concerning previous history that needs careful handling.

The parent/care may be suspicious of you at this point so it is important you put them at ease and clearly explain why you are there.

The purpose of the return interview is to:

- Discover the **factors** which led to the missing episode.
- Inform efforts to **prevent** further episodes.
- Inform any **future** missing person investigation should that person go missing again.
- **Learn** of the activities, associates, risks and victimisation involved in the missing episode, and where possible to **address** those risks.

The guidance then proposes that a Return Interview be conducted to consider in more depth the reason why that person has gone missing and to consider what further action is required to safeguard that young person in future.

GENERAL DISCUSSION SUGGESTIONS TO AID THE RETURN INTERVIEW.

Many young people who run away or go missing need to build up trust with somebody before they will respond to an interview and discuss the reasons why they decided to run away.

The interview and actions that follow from it should:

- identify and deal with any harm the child has suffered, including harm that might not have already been disclosed as part of the Police Safe and Well Check (his/her medical condition should be discussed and any need for medical attention assessed);
- understand and try to address the reasons why the child ran away; and
- try to prevent it happening again.

It will be useful to get to speak to the young person alone if they are happy to do so and the parents/carers are happy with this.

Introduce yourself to the young person and explain the purpose of your discussion, the following is a guide:

“You have been reported missing by your parent/ carer/ family and it is usual practice once you have been missing on more than one occasion, for you to be seen by an independent person to understand the reasons why you went missing. This is to ensure that you are safe and well and to give you the opportunity to speak to someone independent. Also to help us to understand if anything happened to harm you or others in any way whilst you were missing. This is about keeping you safe and also to keep other young people safe who may be even more vulnerable than you. It may be that you are more able to talk to an independent person outside of your family or care setting especially if it is because of something that happened in those settings that led to your going missing.”

As with all meetings with young people you need to inform them of the rules concerning your discussion with them. The following could be used as a guide:

You need to inform the C&YP that:

“.. if during your discussion they disclose an incident whereby either they or another C&YP was harmed or are at risk of harm, or that a criminal offence has been committed, that you have a duty to disclose this matter to other social service professionals and/or the police.”

Now that the introductions and the basis of your discussion have been outlined you need to ask if they are happy to continue with the interview. On the Return Interview form (Appendix 9) you will see the following consent to continue box below. If the young person is happy with what you have explained they should be happy to continue and sign the form as should the parent carer. If they are not it would be useful to investigate with them why they do not wish to continue. There could be an inference made if they refuse to go on with the process and it is

important that you record what they say and what you feel about their refusal. Do you have Safeguarding concerns at this refusal? If so please discuss with your Team Manager at the earliest opportunity. If you have immediate concerns for the young person's safety, contact Family Connect immediately.

Are you happy to continue on that basis?	YES
--	-----

If No then please get the C&YP to sign here indicating that the option has been given. If the C&YP refuses to discuss the matter then the interview can go no further. Please note why they have refused.	Signature of C&YP:
If C&YP has refused to continue the discussion please get parent/carer to sign indicating this also. If parent is present. Note of refusal.	Signature of parent/carer:

Once you have decided that the young person is happy to continue and you consider them to be fit and healthy, both physically and emotionally, then please use the below questions/suggested pointers as aids to the discussion.

This is not to be used as a list to ask the young person as this prevents the young person flowing. Please familiarise yourself with the nature of what the interview is attempting to elicit from the young person and interview accordingly.

It is important to recognize signs of potential abuse and be able to discuss this with parent/carer/young persons as part of the interview process as sensitively as possible. In order to provide some guidance of the reasons young people go missing and also the elements to look out for when considering whether a young person is possibly being exploited or not. Also included in this Guidance is a useful list of these in order to assist you in identifying what may constitute further concerns.

Certain groups of vulnerable children are more likely than others to go missing.

- Young people who have committed offences
- Children living in women's refuges
- Children of homeless families, perhaps living in temporary accommodation
- Young runaways
- Children with long-term medical or emotional problems
- Looked After children
- Children with a gypsy/traveller background
- Young carers
- Children with transient families
- Teenage mothers
- Children who are permanently excluded from school
- Migrant children, whether in families seeking asylum or economic migrants
- Trafficked children

For detailed guidance, see 'Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities in England to identify children not receiving education', published by the DfE in February 2007.

WARNING SIGNS AND VULNERABILITIES CHECKLIST.

The following are typical vulnerabilities in children prior to abuse:

- Living in a chaotic or dysfunctional household (including parental substance use, domestic violence, parental mental health issues, parental criminality).
- History of abuse (including familial child sexual abuse, risk of forced marriage, risk of 'honour'-based violence, physical and emotional abuse and neglect).
- Recent bereavement or loss.
- Gang association either through relatives, peers or intimate relationships (in cases of gang associated CSE only).
- Attending school with young people who are sexually exploited.
- Learning disabilities.
- Unsure about their sexual orientation or unable to disclose sexual orientation to their families.
- Friends with young people who are sexually exploited.
- Homeless.
- Lacking friends from the same age group.
- Living in a gang neighbourhood.
- Living in residential care.
- Living in hostel, bed and breakfast accommodation or a foyer.
- Low self-esteem or self-confidence.
- Young carer.

The following signs and behaviour are generally seen in children who are already being sexually exploited.

- Missing from home or care.
- Physical injuries.
- Drug or alcohol misuse.
- Involvement in offending.
- Repeat sexually-transmitted infections, pregnancy and terminations.
- Absent from school.
- Change in physical appearance.
- Evidence of sexual bullying and/or vulnerability through the internet and/or social networking sites.
- Estranged from their family.
- Receipt of gifts from unknown sources.
- Recruiting others into exploitative situations.
- Poor mental health.
- Self-harm.
- Thoughts of or attempts at suicide.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER.

Can you tell me briefly why you have been reported missing on this occasion?
Are you aware once you are reported missing the police and other agencies are notified?
Have you been missing before?
Can you share with me why you went missing on previous occasions?
If this was the first time....How has things improved by going missing?
Does going missing make things go away?
When you were missing can you tell me where you went?
Can you tell me what you did whilst missing?
Can you tell me if you saw anyone? Were they older than you? Can you tell me who they were?
Was this pre arranged?
Were they missing also? Are they now safe?
How did you get to where you went? On foot? Picked up?
How did you return home? Self? Collected? Returned by someone?
Have you a mobile phone? Did anyone try to contact you?
Were you in any danger whilst missing? Specify?
Were you hurt or harmed in any way? Specify?
Were you scared?

If not already clear?

What led up to you going missing?
Were you running to someone/something? Specify?
Were you running away from someone/something?
Have you ever been hurt or harmed in any way that has led to you going missing? Or whilst you have been missing?
How are things generally at home/in care for you?
Is there anything that I can help you with in terms of activities or signposting you to some clubs? Youth clubs/positive activities groups/someone to talk to mentor/peer?
Discuss situation at school.
Are you aware of local activities that you could get involved in?
Is there any reason that you can see as of today that would lead to you going missing again?
Is there anything the C&YP can do to reduce the chances of going missing?
Is there something any one else can do to reduce this.
Is there something I as Independent visitor can do?

Ask the young person:

What is the most important thing to do now?

The young person may now feel comfortable talking to you so suggest if they wanted to talk to you again rather than going missing then they can call you on your office number. Inform them that if you are in the office you will talk to them and if not you

can ring them back. Unless on holiday. This will make the young person feel important and cared about.

If you feel that you now have enough information to make an informed decision about what to do next, if anything, you can begin to wind up the interview.

Upon completion of the interview please pass the feedback form for the young person to complete (Appendix 10). They can either complete this now or forward once they have done this. Please provide them with SAE to do this if they so wish.

The feedback form will be returned to Sarah Jane Ballantyne Family and Cohesion Services Team Leader Administration who will collate record and monitor.