

# Child Missing or Away without Authorisation

## Policy and Procedures

This document explains the agency's policy and procedures to follow in the event that a child is absent from the foster home without permission, or missing.

The aim of this policy is to:

- Provide clear principles and procedures that are understood and effectively implemented by all staff.
- Enable the missing child to be located as quickly as possible and given the appropriate level of safety and security.
- Ensure that foster parents and staff are alert to the fact that children and young people can go missing at any time of the day or night.

This policy has taken account of the following documents:

- Department for Education (DfE) guidance document on children who run away or go missing from home or care 2014
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018
- National Children Bureau report on Children Missing from Education in England 2016-17
- Ofsted inspection Guidance
- Social Care Common Inspection Framework. (SCCIF): independent fostering agencies, updated March 2018

Policy Owner:	ISP Fostering
Approved by:	Agency Director
Date approved:	March 2026
Next review date:	March 2029
Version No:	4.1
Associated Policy and Supporting documents	

## Contents

Definitions .....	2
Information from Research and Inspection .....	3
Part 1: Information and Policy.....	5
Safeguarding.....	5
Understanding .....	5
Prevention.....	6
Response .....	6
Specific Concerns .....	7
Abduction.....	7
Grooming .....	8
Part 2: Missing Procedures .....	8
Prior to Placement.....	8
Risk Assessments.....	8
Steps to take if a child or young person is found to be missing .....	10
Reporting to the Police .....	12
What to do when the child or young person is found.....	13
Safe and Well Checks.....	14
Return Interview .....	14
Recording.....	15
Flow Chart – Agency Response .....	17
References .....	18

## Definitions

The ‘Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care’ (Jan 2014) uses the following definitions:

**Young runaway:** a child who has run away from their home or care placement or feels they have been forced or lured to leave.

**Missing child:** a child reported as missing to the police by their family or parents.

**Missing from care:** a looked after child 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 authorisation:** a child looked after whose whereabouts is known but who is not at their placement or place they are expected to be and the foster parent has concerns or the incident has been notified to the local authority or the police.

In addition, the police ACPO Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons (2013) identifies the following:

**Missing:** Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.

**Absent:** A person is not at a place where they are expected or required to be.

**Children looked after child missing from their placement:** Where a looked after child is missing from their placement, and his/her whereabouts are not known, and/or the child is known or suspected to be at risk they should be reported to the police as missing and a record of this should be made.

**Children looked after absent from their placement without authorisation:** Where a looked after child is not in their placement as agreed, their whereabouts are known and they are not at risk, foster parents/local authorities need to record 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.

**Children missing education** are defined as: 'children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school'. (Department for Education (2016) 'Children Missing Education Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities').

## Information from Research and Inspection

In 2013, Ofsted undertook a thematic inspection of 10 local authorities which explored the effectiveness of arrangements to safeguard children and young people who are looked after and who are at risk of going missing or running away. Some of the key findings include:

- Strategic approach to children going missing in some authorities was found to be underdeveloped and in nearly all authorities there was not a full understanding at a senior level of the reasons why children go missing. Most authorities were unable to evidence the impact of different interventions.

- Poor recording practices meant that local authorities struggled to collate and analyse children's views accurately to inform service planning.
- Although most procedures and protocols were clear and in place, staff awareness and understanding of those procedures and protocols were variable. Compliance with procedures was generally not effectively tracked by managers.
- In the cases seen, risk assessments and risk management plans were rarely evident. Those that were in place were often insufficiently specific or up to date.
- The attention given within procedures to cross-boundary issues, such as looked after children placed out of authority, was variable. Information-sharing between professionals and placement providers based outside the local authority area was of variable quality.
- While there was evidence of some imaginative preventative work, mainly in schools, overall, the degree of attention paid to prevention was variable.

In recent years, there have been several high-profile court cases and enquiries concerning child sexual exploitation. High-profile inquiries have highlighted the vulnerability of children who go missing, and the associated risks of sexual and criminal exploitation. This has led to government-published proposals to tackle child sexual exploitation. In 2012, two reports highlighted that many children looked after who go missing were not being effectively safeguarded: The Joint All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) Inquiry on Children Who Go Missing from Care and the accelerated report of the Office of the Children's Commissioner's on-going inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups, identified that:

- Children in residential care are at risk of going missing and vulnerable to sexual and other exploitation.
- Local Safeguarding Children Boards have an important role to play in monitoring and interrogating data on children who go missing.

Statistical data compiled by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) shockingly shows that "one child every three minutes" goes missing. The reasons for which children and young people go missing are wide ranging and varied. Some children and young people will decide to leave home although just for short periods, with intention of returning, while others may have become increasingly detached or disengage for a range of reasons. There are also those children and young people who are forced or abducted.

The 'Children who go missing from care: A participatory project with young people' research study (2012) found several factors as to why children and young people go missing or absent themselves. These include issues around power and authority, with young people reporting that they never know what is going on - no one tells them anything, lack of control, lack of trust in adults, decisions being made without their views and wishes being considered as well as feelings of helplessness, isolation and not being listened to.

Listening to children and young people is an important factor in protecting them and minimising the chances of them running away. The Children's Rights Director's report,

'Running Away: children's view' (2012), reported that "one of the major influences of them running away is having a sense that they are not being listened to and taken seriously."

## Part 1: Information and Policy

### Safeguarding

A child being missing from home is a vulnerable child. In cases of short-term missing, the problem will be resolved within a matter of hours or a few days, while long term missing is often more problematic and can last days or weeks and in some cases months. Children and young people who are missing over longer periods often go on to suffer serious harm. Such cases will include children and young people who may have been abducted, kidnapped or those who have been trafficked and exploited.

All missing episodes are therefore a key safeguarding concern, and we are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people in our care.

The 2014 statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing places a duty on local authorities, agencies and partners to work together effectively to safeguard and promote children's welfare. At the point of placement, ISP will work with the placing authority to identify any existing or potential risk of missing episodes and agree an appropriate risk management plan. These discussions and actions will be recorded in the child's Individual Risk Assessment and Safer Care Plan and clearly communicated to the foster family and staff working with the child and family.

Child Protection procedures will be initiated in the event of concerns that the child is at risk of significant harm, and ISP will act in accordance with local police and local authority safeguarding procedures at all times.

### Understanding

Going missing from care can be a signal of how the child or young person may be feeling, or a pointer to something more worrying. For example, the child could be being bullied, experiencing difficulties in the foster home or in the wider community or at school, being sexually and or criminally exploited as well as family issues.

Our staff and foster parents understand the reasons why children and young people may go missing in terms of 'push' and 'pull' factors which expose children and young people to risk, and may seek to exploit them:

- 'Push' factors are things that drive a child/young person from home, for example boredom or relationship problems with foster parents or other young people.

- ‘Pull’ factors are things that draw the child/young person towards the community. This may be activities that they see as exciting, or predatory influences and include drugs, friends, locations and arcades. In the case of ‘pull’ factors, it may be necessary for the service, foster parents and staff to work with local police to target those in the community who may harbour missing children or who exploit them regarding sex, drugs or criminal activity.

All staff and foster parents must be alert to external influences on the child.

## Prevention

We are proactive and effective in the preventative strategies and intervention that minimise risk to children who may go missing. These include having someone to talk to, activities that keep them busy, and importantly ensuring placement stability. We will ensure that care offered to children and young people takes full account of their individual needs and risks, and this is supported through our Secure Base Model of therapeutic care delivered by our foster parents. This model of care helps our children and young people to move towards greater security and builds resilience and self-esteem. It also supports them to develop trust, and to manage their feelings and behaviour. Our staff and foster parents understand the importance of listening to children and young people to help them to feel safe and secure in their foster home.

Children and young people are less likely to leave their home where they feel secure and safe, able to express their feelings and wishes, make appropriate choices and develop positive relationships with staff, foster parents and their peers and feel that they can contribute.

Foster parents and staff will work with children and young people to educate them and to develop their understanding and awareness of the potential risks they may be exposed to when they go missing or absent themselves without telling anyone where they are going. We expect that foster parents, supported by staff, will assist children and young people to identify solutions other than running away and ensure that they know what help is available to them.

ISP ensures that children and young people are carefully matched to foster parents with the right level of skills, experience and understanding to meet the child and young person’s needs. This is effectively monitored through the foster parents’ annual review and foster parents’ supervision. Furthermore, we ensure that foster parents are aware of the impact of moving away from their homes for children and young people, to target the right support that they may need to help them to settle. This includes involving them in decisions about activities and strategies that help them settle.

## Response

We will ensure that children and young people are safeguarded to promote their welfare through the care and support our foster families provide to minimise and to reduce the risk of harm should children and young people go missing.

If children and young people go missing, the procedures set out in Part 2 of this document must be adhered to in all cases.

When the child or young person returns home, foster parents and staff will offer an appropriately supportive response and not take punitive measures against them. We expect that our staff and foster parents will respond appropriately and proportionately, while recognising that the nature of the response will be determined by the child and or young person's legal status, vulnerability and the degree of risk their absence might pose to themselves and others. This should be clearly set out in the risk management, behaviour and placement plans.

We recognise the need to respond effectively and to learn lessons from missing incidents. The Responsible Individual and Registered Managers have a duty to use quality assurance processes and systems as well as feedback from children and young people on reasons for going missing to evaluate and analyse incidents for trends and patterns to inform development and to drive improvement in practice and the delivery of good quality care.

## Specific Concerns

### Abduction

In 2017, it was reported that the number of child abductions had increased. Statistics supplied to the Home Office show that during 2016 there were 1,141 child abduction offences in England, Wales and Northern Ireland - a 15-year high. This figure is said to have doubled since 2011, with the average age of abducted children by strangers being 11 years. Action Against Abduction claims that most of these cases are sexually motivated, yet many attempted abductions are still not reported to police.

Children and young people face the risk of abduction by strangers, who may be motivated to commit sexual offences. Additionally, children may also be abducted following, or because of, family feuds. Furthermore, children and young people may be groomed and targeted by adults for sexual abuse, exploitation, criminality and other illicit activities. Children and young people may be at risk of online grooming.

The Child Abduction Act 1984 makes it a criminal offence for anyone connected with a child under the age of sixteen to take or send that child out of the country without appropriate consent. Persons connected with a child are parents, guardians and persons with a residence order or who have parental responsibility. ISP recognises the difficulties when children and young people are caught up in custodial disagreements between parents and that this can sometimes lead to child abduction. This can place children and young people at risk of harm as the parent may present as a danger to the child as well as impact such areas as contact and change of locality.

Where it is suspected that a child or young person has been abducted, the Registered Manager and or Responsible Individual must report this immediately to the police, local safeguarding partnership and the placing authority including the social worker. In all cases, and where appropriate, the parents should be informed and kept up to date if this does not pose any additional risk to the child or young person.

### Grooming

Grooming is when someone builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or trafficking. Children and young people can be groomed online or face-to-face, by a stranger or by someone they know - for example a family member, friend or professional. Groomers may be male or female and can be of any age.

Many children and young people don't understand that they have been groomed or that what has happened is abuse. Research by NSPCC in 2011 showed that up to 90% of children and young people subjected to sexual grooming had episodes of missing. Sometimes drugs, alcohol or money are used to entice young people, so it's essential that our foster parents remain alert to any unexplained gifts or unusual patterns of behaviour.

## Part 2: Missing Procedures

### Prior to Placement

- As part of the referral process, and prior to placement, consideration must be given to any previous history of missing and/or the likelihood of the child or young person leaving the foster home without permission or absenting themselves. It is therefore important that the Registered Manager, Responsible Individual and/or managers with responsibility for referral and placement ensure these matters are discussed so that the right plans can be put in place.
- Once it has been established that a child and or young person is vulnerable to going missing, the Registered Manager, as part of the referral, matching and care planning procedures, must ensure that appropriate and relevant risk assessments are completed.

### Risk Assessments

- Risk assessments must include child sexual exploitation (CSE) and criminal exploitation (CE) risk assessments using the tool agreed by the local safeguarding partnership. This assessment must involve the child's social worker and the service. It must also address whether the local authority child sexual exploitation coordinators are involved and the

frequency of any missing and child exploitation (MACE) meetings, if this is relevant to the authority.

- Once risk assessments have been completed and the level of risk established, the Registered Manager and Supervising Social Worker must ensure that risks are considered in matching decisions.
- Foster parents must be informed about the risks posed to the child and young person before the placement starts. This will ensure that the foster parents can make informed decisions and ask the right and relevant questions about the child or young person's care, the support to be made available and strategies to minimise risks.
- The foster parents must also be made aware about the arrangements for involving the police and reporting the child or young person as missing. As part of this process, the agency's '*Planning for Missing*' form must be completed so that essential information can be given to the police without delay if a child is reported missing. This form will sit alongside the child's Individual Risk Assessment and Safer Care Plan, and be updated at least six-monthly, or sooner if risk factors change.

Where a risk of going missing has not already been identified, the agency's '*Missing Young Person Grab Sheet*' will be completed instead. This will also sit alongside the child's Individual Risk Assessment and Safer Care Plan and be updated at least six-monthly. If a risk of going missing is identified later, the '*Planning for Missing*' form will be completed.

- The Registered Manager, using the information from the risk assessment and the child's history, will determine with the placing social worker whether there is a need for a multi-disciplinary meeting with those involved with the child, especially where the child or young person is assessed as being at high risk of exploitation. The purpose of this meeting is to:
  - Discuss and agree the child or young person's level of vulnerability.
  - Share information about the child or young person including known triggers, associates or places that the child or young person is known to go.
  - The strategies and intervention to reduce risk of the child going missing.
  - Package of support available for the foster parents, child or young person.
  - Agree actions and arrangements for reporting to the police.
  - Information about agencies providing independent advocacy for the child or young person.
  - Agree what assessments will be carried out following missing and absent episodes.
  - Arrangements for independent return interviews.
  - Level of support and supervision that will be required to minimise risks.

- Wherever possible the Registered Manager will ensure the views of the child and young person is obtained.
  - Ascertain the views of parents, where applicable.
  - If child is placed out of the area, to discuss and consider the impact and the additional risks and safeguards necessary.
  - The arrangements for the child and young person's education and consideration of the risks to their educational achievement when they go missing.
- 
- All the above matters must be incorporated into the child and young person's placement and risk management plans.
  - A record of any meeting as well as initial discussions and agreements made with the placing authority, must be recorded and placed on the child and young person's individual case files.
  - Supervising Social Workers and foster parents must have access to and be familiar with the information, so that effective monitoring and action can be taken at the right time to minimise the likelihood of a child and young person leaving home without permission, therefore placing themselves in an unsafe position.

### Steps to take if a child or young person is found to be missing

If a child or young person goes missing, it is important to establish and confirm the category of absence to inform decision-making and to identify the necessary steps to safeguard the child and young person.

If a foster parent suspects that the child or young person is missing, they should use the following checklist, to consider the level of risk to the child or young person:

- is this event significantly out of character?
- Is the child likely to be subjected to harm or a crime?
- Is the child a danger to themselves or others?
- Is the child likely to attempt suicide?
- Is the child a victim of abuse?
- Does the child have any specific medical needs?
- Is there a specific concern?
  - Do you know the child's whereabouts?
  - Have they done this before?
- Have you been in contact with the child?
  - Who are they with?
- Do you believe them to be involved in crime?
- What were their intended actions when last seen?

- On a day-to-day basis, foster parents should be alert to signs or indications that a child may be likely to 'run away' or become missing. In situations where a child or young person has left or is missing, the foster parent must contact the Supervising Social Worker or Registered Manager, unless there is an immediate serious risk to the child or others, in which case, they should contact the police first. If the incident occurs out of normal office hours, the Out-of-Hours Duty Social Worker / Manager must be contacted.
- The Registered Manager, Supervising Social Worker and or Out of Hours Social Worker/Manager will decide the actions that should be taken when it is reported that a child or young person is missing or absent without permission. The decisions taken will be in line with this procedure, unless alternative action has been agreed with the placing authority and is recorded in the young person's risk assessment/safer care plan. Any deviation from ISP policy and procedure must be documented and clearly explained in the record of the event.

The following should be done once it is established that a child or young person is missing:

- Make enquiries with other children and young people, school friends (if known) and family members where this is appropriate.
- Check the home, grounds, education setting, and the local area including known hang out points to ascertain where the child and young person may be hiding.
- Call the child or young person's mobile phone to try to ascertain their whereabouts (if they are allowed a mobile phone). If they have one– call them at regular intervals in line with what has been defined within their individual risk management plans.
- Under no circumstance must a child or young person be restrained by foster parents to either prevent them from going missing unless this is specifically risk assessed as a strategy to prevent injury to the child or others, or serious damage to property. Any such intervention must be agreed by the placing social worker and others involved with the child's care.
- Furthermore, if the child refuses to return, the staff and or foster parents must secure the assistance of the police and guidance from the placing authority taking account of the child and young person's vulnerability including concerns about exploitation.
- If the child or young person is placed away from home, the local RMFHC protocol must also be considered to ensure and secure reporting.
- It is possible that the child will return to the area of the responsible authority, so it is essential that liaison between the police and professionals in both authorities is well managed and co-ordinated.

These actions should be recorded in the agency's *'Planning for Missing'* form.

The decision about notifying the police will be based on the risk profile using the police criteria of what constitutes 'high' or 'medium' risks, as well as the written missing protocols. However, if a missing child remains in the 'Medium'-level for a total of 6 hours they will automatically fall into the 'High'-level category and the police will be informed. The following factors must also be considered to inform decisions:

- Any medical condition the child or young person might have
- The child or young person's mental health state including history of self-harm
- The level of exploitation risks
- Patterns of behaviour including criminality, drug and alcohol misuse
- Assessed level of vulnerability

### Reporting to the Police

- When it has been decided that a missing child or young person should be reported to the police, the agency's *'Planning for Missing'* form must be provided to the police, in addition to any information they request by telephone. This will ensure that the police have all the necessary information about risks, and to help them search for and locate the young person.
- The Registered Manager and Supervising Social Worker, or Out-of-Hours Social Worker/Manager will ensure that missing incidents are reviewed every two hours and that they remain alert to changes in circumstances. If the child is missing outside of office hours, the Emergency Duty Team for the child's placing authority must be informed, and the authority in which the foster parent lives.
- Foster parents are provided with the necessary Out of Hours support and are aware of the contact details of the local and placing authority's emergency duty teams.
- Where a child remains missing, the police and child's social worker must be consulted every six hours to determine the continued level of risk.
- If there are any further developments, or if the child or young person contacts the foster parent, this information must be passed to the police, social worker and Out-of-Hours service without delay.
- The Registered Manager must ensure that where a child or young person goes missing and they are assessed as high risk of being exploited, or there are concerns about their mental health, this is notified to Ofsted in line with the Notification of Serious Events Policy.

## What to do when the child or young person is found

- Once the child has been located, the Registered Manager, Supervising Social Worker and or Duty Manager must ensure effective arrangements are in place to return the child to the foster home. At the same time, the arrangements must consider and focus on promoting the child or young person's welfare.
- As noted earlier, where a child or young person fails to engage and refuses to return to the foster home, the Registered Manager and or Supervising Social Worker must liaise with the police and social worker but under no circumstances must the foster parent instigate the use of restraint to secure compliance.
- Once a child returns to the foster home, the foster parent must inform the Registered Manager and Supervising Social Worker or Duty Manager without delay. They must report on the child or young person's presentation as this may point to the need for additional safeguards to be put in place. For example, did they return in the same clothes, have bruising, change of mood, have unknown items or excess amount of money. The foster parents must ensure that these matters are detailed in the records and on CHARMS.
- If, on their return, the foster parent has concerns about immediate risk to the child or young person's safety and that they may have been exploited, the police must be contacted immediately.
- Children and young people must, irrespective of the circumstances surrounding why they went missing, be positively welcomed home by the foster parent.
- Foster parents should express relief that the child/young person has returned safely and should attend to any immediate needs (food/drink, medical attention, etc.).
- If a child has had three missing episodes within 90 days, ISP will ask the placing authority to convene a strategy meeting, if one has not already taken place.
- The Registered Manager will have monthly meetings with the Head of Safeguarding to monitor episodes of missing or unauthorised absence.
- The Registered Manager, in consultation with the Responsible Individual may, in certain cases, and/or where a child or young person's missing episodes are persistent, conclude that due to the risks and despite several interventions, they are not able to keep the child safe. If this happens, the matter must be discussed at the child-in-care review meeting or urgent planning meeting.

The Registered Manager must ensure that clear systems are in place for situations where the placing authority does not respond to requests for a meeting, to escalate the matter to a senior manager in the local authority. This is necessary to avoid delays and to make sure

action is taken to safeguard the child and/or young person. In all cases, a copy of the correspondence must be maintained on the child or young person's case records.

### Safe and Well Checks

The statutory guidance on children going missing notes that:

'Safe and well checks are carried out by the police as soon as possible after a child reported as missing has been found. Their purpose is to check for any indications that the child 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 child goes missing frequently, agreement should be reached between the police, the service, child's social worker and foster parent, about the frequency of such checks bearing in mind the established link between frequent missing episodes and serious harm, which could include gang involvement, forced marriage, bullying or sexual exploitation. The reason for a decision not to conduct a safe and well check should be recorded on the case file.

### Return Interview

It is the responsibility of the placing authority to make the necessary arrangements to undertake a return interview with the child or young person following a missing incident. This meeting should take place within 72 hours, and in private. It is important that this interview takes place with someone independent of the service.

When the young person has returned to their foster home, ISP will contact the placing authority to request the arrangement of a return interview.

In the meantime, ISP may conduct a welfare check with the child or young person and this could take place face-to-face, by telephone or video call in accordance with the young person's needs and wishes. The purpose of the welfare check would be to identify any immediate physical or emotional support needs, reassure the young person of their safety and provide an opportunity for them to share information if they wish. The welfare check is not intended to replace or duplicate the return interview. The outcome of the welfare check should be recorded on the child's 'Charms' record as a 'child visit –seen alone' and linked to the significant event record.

If a child refuses to engage with the welfare check, a clear record must be made of the attempts made and reasons for the child or young person's reluctance to engage.

The purpose of a return interview is to:

- Help identify and deal with any harm the child or young person has suffered, including harm that might not have already been disclosed in the safe and well check
- Understand and try to address the reasons why the young person ran away

- Help the child or young person to feel safe and to understand that they have options to prevent repeat instances of them leaving or running away
- Provide the young person with information on how they can keep safe

Any additional safeguards should be identified and shared with the service and foster parents.

It is especially important that this interview takes place when a child/young person:

- Has been reported missing on two or more occasions
- Is frequently absent without authorisation
- Has been hurt or harmed while they have been missing
- Is at known or suspected risk of sexual exploitation or trafficking
- Is at known or suspected risk of involvement in criminal activity or drugs
- Has contact with persons posing risk to children; and/or
- Has been engaged or is believed to have engaged in criminal activities during their absence

Where a child goes missing for long periods of time or very regularly, the child, their social worker, the supervising social worker and the foster family will meet to decide what action should be taken to help and protect the child. A strategy should be agreed for managing these incidents.

Following the Safe and Well Check, ISP welfare check and Independent Return Interview, all stakeholders should work together to build a comprehensive picture of:

- Why the child/young person went missing
- What happened while they were missing
- Who they were missing with and where they were found
- What support they require upon their return and to prevent them from going missing again

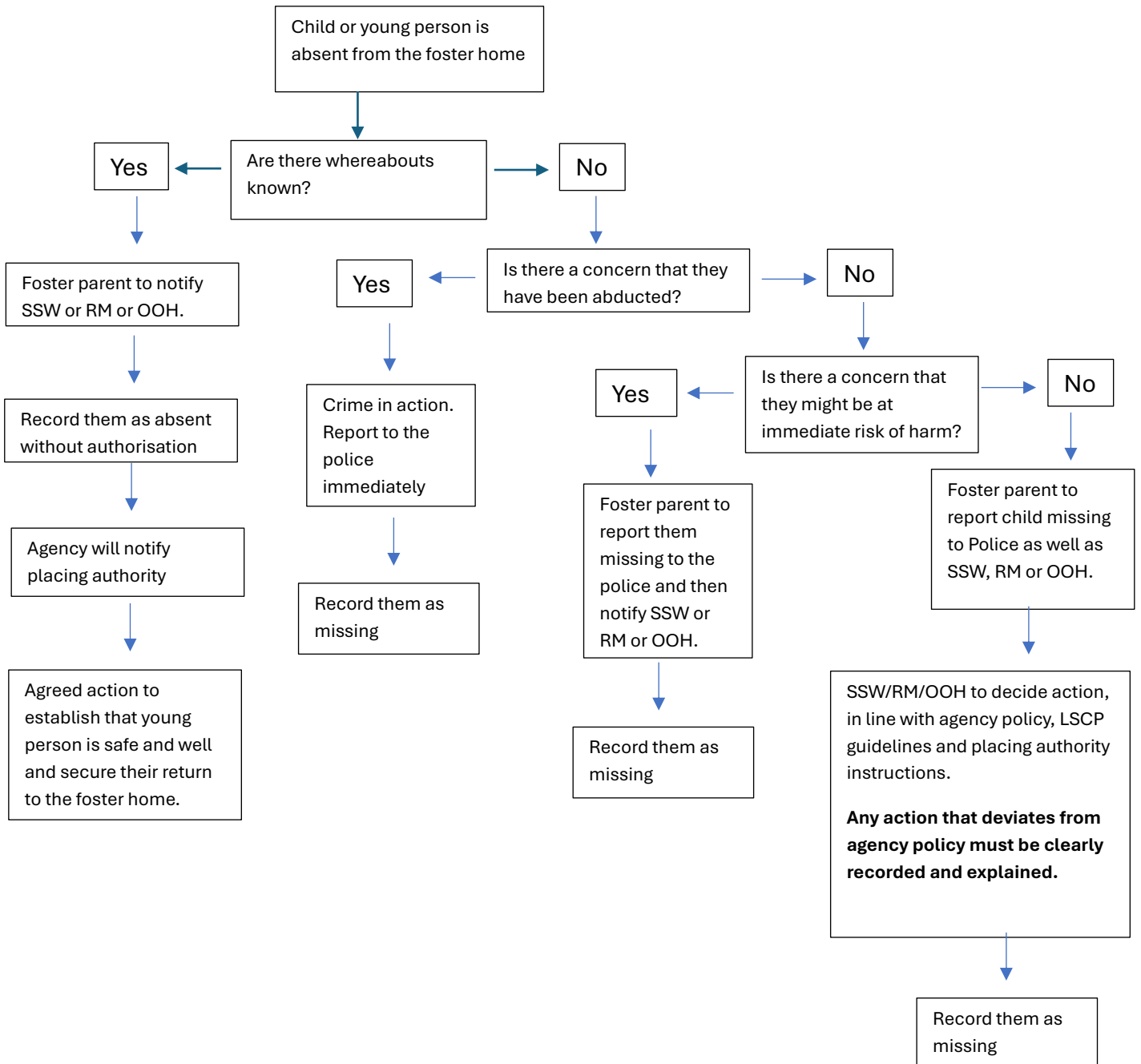
## Recording

The Registered Manager is responsible for ensuring that clear records are maintained of all incidents of children and young people going missing as well as absence and uploaded to CHARMS:

- There must be a detailed chronology of events and audit trail.
- Foster parents must keep records of absence and missing. the records should detail:
  - Antecedents leading up to the child or young person going missing.
  - Action taken by the foster parent to engage the child and to prevent them leaving.

- Action taken by foster parent to locate the child.
  - Who the incident was reported to.
  - The child's presentation on leaving the foster home.
- The Supervising Social Worker must, during supervision, monitor foster parents' records. Where there are gaps, the Supervising Social Worker must offer guidance on improvements in recording.
- Include details of the circumstances of the child's return
- Any reasons given by the child for the absence
- Any action taken considering those reasons why the child or young person left the foster home or did not return when expected
- The Registered Manager must notify the placing authority, including the social worker and police where necessary, and other relevant agencies
- If it is appropriate to notify Ofsted, the Registered Manager must ensure that notification information is completed to a good standard
- If necessary, the Registered Manager must ensure that an appropriate meeting is convened to discuss and agree additional safeguards needed as well as any changes in strategies
- In some cases, additional resources will be required to support the child or young person and foster parent. It is important that the Registered Manager ensures any such resources are identified and agreed with the placing authority
- Risk assessment, placement and care plans must be updated and shared with the foster parent

### Flow Chart – Agency Response



## References

The following regulations and standards are relevant to this policy:

Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care (Department for Education, 2013)

Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, Regulation 13 Behaviour management and absence from the foster parents' home;

Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, Regulation 11 Independent Fostering Agencies – duty to secure welfare;

Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, Schedule 7, Events and Notifications;

National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (England) 2011, Standard 5 Children Missing from Care.

Safeguarding Children and Young People Procedure

Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation Procedure

On-Call Procedure

Foster Parent Handbook

Local Safeguarding Partnership procedures

Version 01, Jan 2021

Version 02, Oct 2021

Version 03, June 2022 (full review and update)

Version 3.1, June 2023 (return interviews section)

Version 04, July 2024 (full review and update of procedures and documents)

Version 4.1, March 2026 (document name change for consistency with Polaris procedure)