MISSING CHILD PROTOCOL & POLICE LIAISON STRATEGY

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Site address: 29 Cartmel Close, Bolton, BL9 8JA
Application type: Full Planning Permission
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1.0 Introduction

This Missing Child Protocol and Police Liaison Strategy has been prepared in support of the application for Full Planning Permission for the proposed children's residential care home at 29 Cartmel Close, Bolton, BL9 8JA. The purpose of this document is to set out the operational framework that will govern the home's response when a young person goes missing from care, and to describe the arrangements for liaison with Greater Manchester Police.

The protocol has been developed in accordance with the statutory guidance Statutory Guidance on Children Who Run Away or Go Missing from Home or Care (2014), the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 as amended, and the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015. It reflects both the legal obligations of the provider and the professional commitment of the management team to safeguarding young people.

2.0 Safeguarding Framework

The safety and whereabouts of every young person in the home's care is a safeguarding matter of the highest priority. The provider operates within a whole-home safeguarding culture in which the protection of young people is the responsibility of every member of staff at every hour of the day and night. Missing from care incidents are treated with the same urgency and seriousness as any other category of safeguarding concern.

The Registered Manager serves as the designated safeguarding lead and is responsible for ensuring that the missing child protocol is understood and followed by all staff, that all incidents are responded to promptly and appropriately, and that all notifications and referrals required by law and by local authority procedures are made without delay.

3.0 Prevention Measures

The most effective response to missing incidents is prevention. The home's care and risk management approach is designed to minimise the likelihood of young people going missing through the development of trusting relationships, an understanding of each young person's individual triggers and risk factors, and proactive management of situations that have previously preceded absences.

Each young person's care plan will include a section addressing any history of missing from care episodes and setting out the preventive strategies that have been identified as effective for that individual. Risk assessments will be reviewed following every missing incident to identify learning and adaptations that may reduce the risk of recurrence. Staff will be trained to recognise the behavioural and emotional indicators that may precede a young person leaving without permission and to intervene early and therapeutically.

4.0 Definition of Missing

A young person will be considered missing from care when they are absent from the home without the knowledge or agreement of staff, or when they fail to return at the agreed time and their whereabouts

are unknown. This definition applies regardless of the young person's age or the circumstances of the absence.

A young person will be considered absent rather than missing where their whereabouts are known to staff and there is no immediate concern for their safety, but they have not returned to the home at the agreed time. Absent incidents will be managed in accordance with the home's absent-without-leave procedure and will be reviewed to assess whether they should be reclassified as missing.

5.0 Response Procedure

Upon identifying that a young person is missing, the member of staff who identifies the absence will immediately notify the Registered Manager or, in their absence, the most senior staff member on duty. The following steps will be taken without delay: an immediate internal search of the property and immediate surroundings will be conducted; attempts will be made to contact the young person by telephone or through any known contacts; and known locations frequented by the young person will be checked where it is safe to do so.

If the young person has not been located within a period appropriate to their individual risk profile — which may be as short as a few minutes for a young person with a high-risk profile — Greater Manchester Police will be contacted and the missing person reported. A referral will also be made to the young person's allocated social worker and the placing authority's out-of-hours team.

The Registered Manager will maintain oversight of the response throughout the period of the young person's absence, coordinating with police, the commissioning authority, and any relevant third parties. A detailed log of all actions taken and communications made will be maintained throughout the incident.

6.0 Police Liaison

The home will establish and maintain a positive and proactive working relationship with the local policing team within Greater Manchester Police. The Registered Manager will make introductory contact with the local neighbourhood policing team prior to the home's commencement of operation, providing information about the home, its client group, and the missing child protocol.

All missing person reports will be made to Greater Manchester Police in accordance with the statutory guidance, and staff will cooperate fully with any police-led investigation or search. The home will provide police with any information that may assist in locating a missing young person, including physical description, known associates, frequented locations, and any recent changes in the young person's circumstances or emotional state.

The home will participate in any multi-agency missing exploitation and trafficking (MET) meetings or child exploitation safeguarding partnerships convened by Greater Manchester Police or the local authority where a young person's missing incidents give rise to concerns about contextual risk.

7.0 Return and Follow-Up

Upon a young person's return to the home, staff will ensure that the young person is safe, unharmed, and has received any medical attention required. The young person will be given the opportunity to speak with their keyworker in a calm and private setting, and any immediate safeguarding concerns identified will be actioned without delay.

Every young person who has been missing will be offered an independent return interview, conducted by a suitably trained professional who is independent of the home, within 72 hours of their return. The purpose of the return interview is to understand why the young person went missing, to identify any risks

to which they may have been exposed during the period of absence, and to inform any necessary adaptations to their care plan.

The findings of the return interview will be shared with the young person's allocated social worker and commissioning authority, and will be used to update the young person's risk assessment and, where necessary, to develop a revised prevention strategy.

8.0 Recording and Review

All missing from care incidents will be recorded in full in the home's incident log, including the time of identification, all actions taken, the time of return, and the outcome of the return interview. Records will be maintained in a format that enables pattern analysis across the young person's period of residence.

The Registered Manager will review missing incident data on a monthly basis as part of the quality assurance cycle and will report any significant patterns or emerging risks to the responsible individual. All missing incidents will be notified to Ofsted in accordance with the notification requirements set out in the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015.

9.0 Conclusion

This Missing Child Protocol demonstrates that the proposed home has robust, operationally tested, and legally compliant arrangements in place for responding to missing from care incidents. The protocol is grounded in best practice, aligned with national statutory guidance, and supported by a staffing model designed to minimise the risk of missing incidents through preventive, relationship-based care.

Bury Metropolitan Borough Council is invited to note that the arrangements described in this document are consistent with those operated by well-managed children's homes across England and that they represent no material planning concern in relation to the proposed use of the property.