

BOLTON MISSING STRATEGY 2017 – 2019

Working Together To Safeguard Children Who Go Missing From Home, Care or Education

Introduction

When a child goes missing or runs away, they are at risk and therefore this is a safeguarding issue. When missing, children may experience physical and / or emotional abuse, or may take part in risk taking and self-harming behaviour. They may feel fear and loneliness or put themselves in dangerous situations using coping strategies such as sleeping rough or committing crime in order to survive. Family and social relationships may suffer, education may be affected and life chances at risk of being adversely affected. Children who go missing are vulnerable to trafficking, violent crime, drug and alcohol misuse and exploitation, including sexual exploitation.

Children missing education are similarly at risk and could be identified as some of the most vulnerable children – particularly as they are unlikely to have access to or be visible to practitioners who could safeguard them.

Bolton partners recognise that there are opportunities to work together to understand the reasons why children go missing, prevent this where possible and reduce or prevent the impact of missing on individual children.

Push factors that may lead to a child going missing:

- Problems at home – ranging from arguments with parents to long-term abuse or maltreatment or living in neglectful situations
- Family break-up – young people drawn into their parents' conflicts are less likely to do well at school and more likely to truant or to run away from home
- Mental and emotional health problems – a disproportionate number of young people who run away from home have a mental health problem
- Problems at school including relationships with teachers or other pupils, ceasing to attend due to exclusion or withdrawal by parent or removal from roll with no named destination
- Bullying – children who are being bullied are more likely to run away
- Teenage pregnancy – some young women run away or are forced to leave home because they become pregnant (or fear that they may be pregnant). They may also be in denial about their pregnancy, meaning that they are not getting the advice they need about pregnancy options. There is also a greater risk of pregnancy when girls run away.

Pull factors that may lead to a child going missing:

- Running to be near friends or family – especially when a child is in care and there are problems in contact arrangements with family and friends
- Grooming for potential sexual exploitation or child trafficking – a child may be coerced to go missing by someone who has power or control over them and seeks to exploit them
- Criminality/ exploitation

This strategy has been developed to ensure a consistent understanding and approach to children missing from home, care or education who are under 18 years old and reflects the local priorities for the next two years. It aims to be compliant with [Statutory Guidance on Children who Run Away or go Missing from Home or Care](#) and the [Greater Manchester Standardised Approach to dealing with Missing and Absent Children and Young People across Greater Manchester](#).

This strategy was endorsed by Bolton Safeguarding Children Board on 15 September 2017.

Bolton Missing Strategy 2017 – 2019

Working Together to safeguard children who go missing from home, care or education

Vision: to co-ordinate local work to ensure children who go missing are safe from abuse and neglect accidental injury, crime and anti-social behaviour, bullying and discrimination

THEME	Prevention and Increasing Awareness	Protecting	Provision
KEY TASKS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A multi-agency approach is developed relating to children who go missing • Data collection and analysis • Raise awareness of the potential and actual risks to children who go missing • Procedures are established and implemented for identifying and supporting children who are likely to be missing from education • Ensure that children have access to support and information • Contribute to standardising Greater Manchester approaches to missing and respond to cross border cases • Consider implications from new policy legislation, research and guidance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer all children who go missing an independent return interview • Develop an agreed multi-agency framework for assessing and classifying risk in relation to missing • A consistent response is taken in relation to all missing episodes where actions are delivered based on knowledge of the child's circumstances • Response to children who are known to be missing from education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a local independent return interview programme for children who go missing • Ensure multi-agency plans are in place and these are child focused • Ensure children missing education are supported to access provision • Provide a training programme to providers, practitioners and case managers to ensure children who go missing receive a service that reduces further missing episodes and manages risks if they do go missing
RESPONSIBLE	Missing and CSE Steering Group RUNA Integrated Working Team Children's Services Head of Service	RUNA CME officer Missing and CSE Steering Group	RUNA All Services who work with children who go missing Missing and CSE Steering group

KEY THEME: Prevention and Raising Awareness

Mission	Prevent children from going missing and reduce the number of children going missing on repeat occasions.						
Core membership for this theme	Missing and CSE Steering Group; RUNA; Phoenix Exit Team; CME officer; Integrated Working Team; Children's Services Head of Service						
Work streams	Develop a multi-agency approach with a senior nominated officer to monitor policies and performance relating to children who go missing	Data collection and analysis	Raise awareness of the potential and actual risks to children who go missing	Procedures are established and implemented for identifying and supporting children who are likely to be missing from education	Contribute to standardising Greater Manchester approaches to missing and respond to cross border cases	Consider implications from new policy legislation, research and guidance	Ensure that children have access to support and information
Additional contributors		Children's Services Policy and Strategy Team	Service managers and trainers	Schools EHE officer Early Intervention Team	GMP group Footsteps Steering Group	Children's Services Policy and Strategy Team	Information officers
Objectives	Plan in place which clearly outlines Bolton's approach to missing	There is shared knowledge of children reported missing and also of the factors that may cause a child to go missing and how to prevent this	Guidance and training materials will be developed for delivery by single agencies	Children missing education are identified and all measures taken to locate the child are made	Identify best practice and ensure consistency especially for cases where children are missing across borders	Policy, practice and processes are up to date and compliant with legislation and statutory guidance	Awareness raising events will be delivered in schools, youth clubs and colleges. Information for children and parents will be produced
Outcomes	Structured and focused approach to children who go missing Action plan in place	Quality data will be collated and analysed, including potential risks and how to reduce these	Practitioners can provide the best support to children to reduce missing episodes and manage risks	Children missing education are located	Links will be made with police and corresponding officers across GM	Current policy and processes will remain up to date and compliant with new policy, research and legislation	Children and parents will be provided with information to reduce risks
Measurement Tools	Strategy developed and agreed. Action plan implementation reports.	Regular data reports	Training records, reports and evaluations. Case studies	Standardised reports of children missing education	Minutes of meetings. Standard Greater Manchester return interview template .	Policies and processes reviewed and updated when required (including Tri-X policies)	Copies of information documents/info on websites. Evaluation from events.

KEY THEME: Protection

Mission	To reduce the actual or potential risk of harm to children who go missing			
Core membership for this theme	Missing and CSE Steering Group; RUNA; Phoenix Exit team; Integrated Working Team; Children's Services Head of Service; SEAM group.			
Work streams	Offer all children who go missing an independent return interview	Develop an agreed multi-agency framework for assessing and classifying risk in relation to missing	A consistent response is taken in relation to all missing episodes where actions are delivered based on knowledge of the child's circumstances	Response to children who are known to be missing from education
Additional contributors	Social Workers for Bolton children placed out of borough		Lead Professionals SEAM group	Early Intervention Team Schools
Objectives	Information is collected from missing children to understand any reasons for missing and what happened during the missing episode. Child's voice is heard. Return interviews are audited for quality	A consistent understanding is developed across the practitioner workforce of the risk indicators in relation to missing. Best practice interventions are delivered in accordance with Framework for Action processes. Patterns are analysed and outcomes are monitored, including children placed in the area by other local authorities	Plans identify interventions to prevent and protect children who are reported missing more than once – these are informed by information from return interviews. Links between CSE and missing are identified where relevant. Effective multi-agency meetings are in place at both operational and strategic levels as appropriate. Innovative and collaborative approaches are identified to protect the most vulnerable children who are reported missing.	CME officer is informed by schools of missing children in accordance with published policy. Checks are undertaken by schools and other practitioners within 10 days of first absence.
Outcomes	Information is used for prevention of future missing, informed interventions can be provided in relation to risk or harm.	A standardised understanding of risks and responses relating to missing are commonly understood by all partners and these are actioned at the appropriate level.	Repeat missing episodes and risks related to missing are reduced.	
Measurement Tools	Copies of return interviews are recorded. Audit reports. Case audits identify information has been shared and used to inform plans	Risk measurement tool and guidance. Case audits.	Missing reports Case audits evidence compliance with strategy and processes Case studies. Children taken off SEAM agenda	

KEY THEME: Provision

Mission	To reduce the actual or potential risk of harm to children who go missing			
Core membership for this theme	Missing and CSE Steering Group; RUNA; Phoenix Exit team; Integrated Working Team; Children's Services Head of Service			
Work streams	Provide a local independent return interview programme for children who go missing	Ensure multi-agency plans are in place and these are child focused	Ensure children missing education are supported to access provision	Provide a training programme to providers, practitioners and case managers to ensure children who go missing receive a service that reduces further missing episodes and manages risks if they do go missing
Additional contributors	Commissioning team	Lead Professionals	Early Intervention Team Schools	Staff development group Service managers
Objectives	Information is gathered about missing episode to understand reasons for missing, prevent future missing episodes, identify and deal with any crimes, risks or actual harm that may have happened relating to the missing.	Children who go missing receive appropriate support identified through assessment and needs are met through multi-agency planning and delivery. Assessments and plans are informed by the child's 'voice' recorded in return interviews	Schools and practitioners use Framework for Action processes to support children missing education into provision	Practitioners in all services are aware of the risk indicators in relation to children going missing; understand the processes and provision in place in Bolton to support children now go missing and the role they have to play in safeguarding these children.
Outcomes	All children receive a return interview within 72 hours of returning from a missing episode where possible. Information is recorded and shared with Lead Professionals. Information is utilised to locate a child if missing again, to inform trigger plans and safeguarding plans	Every child who is missing more than once has a plan in place to prevent or reduce further missing episodes and to safeguard and promote their well-being.	Children missing education will be located and supported into provision.	Training materials are developed and delivered in services. Practitioners act on training received.
Measurement Tools	System reports. Audit reports.	Regular missing data reports Case audit reports Case studies SEAM reports	Data reports from Early Intervention Team.	Training reports/evaluations. Case studies Data reports