



Key changes to Warwickshire Safeguarding Partnership Procedure – Children Missing from Home & Care Protocol

Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP) has revised the Missing Children Protocol outlining procedures to be followed for children missing from Home & Care. Children Missing Education (CME) is now subject of a separate Protocol implemented in February 2020.

The key changes from the 2018 Protocol are as follows:

An emphasis that children will exhibit normal adolescent behaviour in testing boundaries, and it is not helpful to consider every incident of lateness or absence as significant concern requiring a missing report

- Action for Children in Care should be in accordance with the Care Providers information pack providing guidance on the level of intervention required.
- Clearer guidance on what constitutes unauthorised absence as opposed to classification of missing.

General updating of terminology and the changes to service provision in Warwickshire, such as:

- Child Exploitation & Missing Team transitioning to a Family & Adolescent Support Team (FAST).
- Missing Coordinator role in the Children & Families Front Door.
- Change in terminology from 'Return Home Interview' to now be called a 'Return Conversation' to more accurately reflect the restorative practice conducted.

Greater emphasis on the responsibility of all agencies to support identification of children going missing when not reported, and the importance of supporting the Police investigation to locate and safely recover a missing child at the earliest opportunity through sharing information and making proportionate enquiries

- A new section on Children in Care (Section 6).
- Inclusion of the Philomena Protocol emphasising actions required in compliance
- Continuance of service delivery and application of the procedures to Care Leavers transitioning to adulthood where significant concern remains regarding missing events and exposure to extra-familial harm.



Devolved responsibility for the following functions:

- Chairing of meetings at the first stage Strategy Meeting or Missing Intervention Meeting by a Team Leader or in some circumstances a Lead Practitioner, escalating to Operations Manager at the second stage in-line with current thresholds.
- Authorisation of publicity/media release now by a WCC Operations Manager and Police Inspector.

Increased oversight of missing children

- Multi-agency review of missing children considered at high risk and those missing for over 24 hours at a Daily Review of Exploitation and Missing Meeting.
- Increased review and assessment of missing children conducted in the Front Door
- Earlier Strategy Meeting at 48 hours for high risk missing children.
- Multi-agency review for children persistently not engaging in Return Conversations.

Change to the Missing Intervention Meeting (MIM) thresholds to provide clarity and a more proportionate system that retains a necessary focus on responding effectively to escalating risk.

- Stage 1 – remains 3 episodes in 90 days.
- Stage 2 – now 6 episodes in 90 days.
- Escalation – now 9 episodes in 90 days.

A new Escalation & Conflict Resolution section to guide practitioners on the process to be followed where there is disagreement on the level of risk posed to a missing child, or concern about lack of action.

Please note:

The new Protocol is aligned with the Regional Child Protection Procedures for West Midlands 'Guidance for Children Missing from Care, Home & Education' (implemented to move to a more consistent regional approach to multi-agency working around safeguarding across boundary areas.)

The Warwickshire Protocol however should be utilised by Warwickshire practitioners to ensure that local processes, pathways, and expectations are well understood.