PRIORY
EDUCATION AND
CHILDREN'S SERVICES

POLICY TITLE:	**Running Away / Missing**
Policy Number:	ECS 06
Applies to:	All Service Types: England, Scotland, Wales
Version Number:	01
Date of Issue:	15/06/2017
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Author:	Education & Children's Services Quality Team
Ratified by:	Stephanie Rickson, Divisional Policy Lead
Responsible signatory:	Mary Rayner, Director for Quality Assurance & Improvement
Outcome:	This policy aims to ensure a consistent and proactive response to safeguarding children and young people by reducing the risks of young people running away or going missing and ensuring a consistent response in the event of such incidents.
Cross Reference:	OP04 – Incident Management, Reporting and Investigation ECS04 – Positive Behaviour Management ECS01 – Safeguarding Children

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STATEMENT
Priory Group is committed to the fair treatment of all in line with the Equality Act 2010. An equality impact assessment has been completed on this policy to ensure that it can be implemented consistently regardless of any protected characteristics and all will be treated with dignity and respect.

In order to ensure that this policy is relevant and up to date, comments and suggestions for additions or amendments are sought from users of this document. To contribute towards the process of review, e-mail RARHelpdesk@priorygroup.com.

Running Away / Missing

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In order to effectively implement this policy, each Education and Children's Service facilities will have local procedures in place where necessary, which explain how this policy is applied and put into practice at site level.

1.2 Template **ECS LP 06** is provided for this purpose and includes a key content checklist.

2 AIMS

2.1 When a child or young person runs away or goes missing they are at risk. The effective safeguarding of the children and young people cared for and educated within Priory Education and Children's Services includes protecting them from this risk. This policy outlines the framework for effective risk assessment management and prevention of running away/missing episodes.

2.2 Since local procedures may vary considerably, being agreed with local police forces to align with their own protocols and those of the host authority, this policy provides an overview and basic principles for prevention and response to incidents of running away or going missing, to be supported by detailed local procedures.

2.3 At every site protocols are expected to align with the DfE Statutory Guidance on Children Who Run Away or Go Missing (January 2014).

3 DEFINITIONS

3.1 Consistent and clearly understood definitions for children or young people who are not present where they are expected to be are key to ensuring a suitable and timely response to running away or missing incidents.

3.2 In April 2013 the police revised their definition for 'missing' and 'absent' in relation to children and adults reported as missing:
- **Missing:** Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character, or the context suggests the person maybe subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another
- **Absent:** A person not at a place where they are expected or required to be.

3.3 Note that 'absent', within this definition, would not include those children defined as 'away from school without authorisation'. A child whose whereabouts are known would not be treated as either 'missing' or 'absent'.

3.4 Note that 'Absconding' or 'Unlawfully at large' are legal terms and refer to children/young people who are not at the place they should be as stated on a court/ legal order for instance on remand or subject to a curfew order. Young people in this category must be reported to the police as a missing person.

3.5 **Schools and colleges:** In Common Law, schools have a duty of care towards their pupils. This duty of care requires that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that pupils are safe and remain within the care of the school at all times throughout the school day, and during school led activities.

3.5.1 All **schools** must inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days

or more, at such intervals as are agreed between the school and the local authority (or in default of such agreement, at intervals determined by the Secretary of State) (Regulation 12(1) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006).

3.6   A child or young person who goes missing places themselves and others at risk; every 'missing' episode requires immediate staff attention. When a young person goes missing the immediate response of staff should be to prevent harm and to recover the young person to safety as soon as possible.

4   LOCAL PROCEDURES AND PROTOCOLS

4.1   Each site will have specific local procedures and protocols to follow, developed in consultation with their local police force and other relevant agencies, and taking into account their Local Area Risk Assessment. Both documents will be reviewed at least annually.

5   PREVENTION AND RISK ASSESSMENT

5.1   On admission a Running Away Risk Assessment (**ECS Form: 06**) should be completed for each child or young person. This should be reviewed annually, and after any incident of running away or going missing. This process identifies the likelihood of the child or young person running away or going missing, and the probable/their vulnerability while running away or missing, enabling staff to appropriate action in any individual case.

5.2   Staff are expected to be aware of and seek to minimise individual risk of running away or going missing, utilising where necessary the de-escalation skills taught through 'Team Teach' Training and other behaviour support, listening and communication training.

6   STAFF AWARENESS OF RISK

6.1   In addition to being aware of individual and environmental risks associated with children and young people and the local area, staff should be fully aware of the risks associated with running away and missing: Training in relation to safeguarding, child sexual exploitation and other forms of exploitation including the risks of extremism and radicalisation are provided to all staff: (See Safeguarding Training Matrices and Mandatory Training information for details).

7   RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS OF RUNNING AWAY AND MISSING

7.1   Details should be kept of the child or young person's key contacts for example close family members together with locations where the child or young person is likely to go to. This information can then be conveyed to the police in the event that notification is made. As far as possible staff should also have a record of the child or young person's mobile telephone number as a means of maintaining contact with him/her.

7.2   Staff are expected to be proactive in searching for children or young people believed to have run away, or to be missing, shadowing and remaining in communication with the child/young person wherever suitable.

8   REPORTING AND RECORDING

8.1   All incidents of running away and missing should be fully recorded using the Group Incident reporting system (See Policy **OP04** for details).

8.2   For serious and significant incidents staff should also use the division's immediate escalation process to inform their Operational Management Team

8.3   In any incident involving running away and missing, many actions and communications take place, often extending over several shifts: To ensure effective management of information, a chronology of events form is available for staff to use to keep a running record of the incident

(**ECS Form: 06C**). An individual record of episodes of running away and missing should be maintained for each child who is involved in any episode of running away or missing (**ECS Form: 06D**).

9 'SAFE AND WELL' CHECKS

9.1 After returning from any episode of running away or going missing the child or young person should always be offered a 'safe and well check', including seeing a health professional should they so wish.

9.2 Safe and Well Checks should be completed by an independent person, and where a placing authority does not provide such a person, sites should be prepared to use local resources to provide such an independent person. This will generally require having a suitably trained and checked person in place who is able to respond promptly should the need arise.

10 LEARNING AND DEBRIEFS

10.1 After returning from any episode of running away or going missing the child or young person should be encouraged and supported to participate in a 'Debrief Meeting': The structure format and conduct of such meeting will vary on an individually responsive basis: A basic template detailing areas to be covered and providing a recording framework is provided on (**ECS Form: 06B**), however sites may choose instead to record the debrief directly on the electronic form via eCompliance, using (**ECS Form: 06B)** as a guide to content.

10.2 Managers reviewing debrief reports are expected to ensure that any lessons learned and actions identified are disseminated and/or implemented in a timely manner. This includes notifying the relevant responsible authorities of any issues which may relate to possible offences and/or safeguarding.

10 GOVERNANCE AND MONITORING

10.1 Registered and Site Managers are responsible for monitoring incidents of running away and missing at their own site, with the Education Services Operational Team overviewing incidents.

10.2 The Education and Children's Services Running away/missing focus group meets monthly to review and monitor incidents of running away and missing: This includes looking at trends and patterns in running away and missing, and any individual cases of persistent running away/missing: (See **Supporting Document ESC SD 16G** for Terms of Reference). This group reports to the Education and Children's Services Division Safety and Safeguarding Committee.

10.3 Running away incidents are also a Quality Performance Indicator monitored on a monthly basis at divisional and group level.

10.4 Where either the Education Services Operational Team, Quality Team or Education Division Safety and Safeguarding Committee feel it necessary a Critical Incident Review in relation to running away or missing incidents. **(ECS Form: 06A)**

11 BASIC ACTION CYCLE: RUNNING AWAY OR MISSING:

11.1
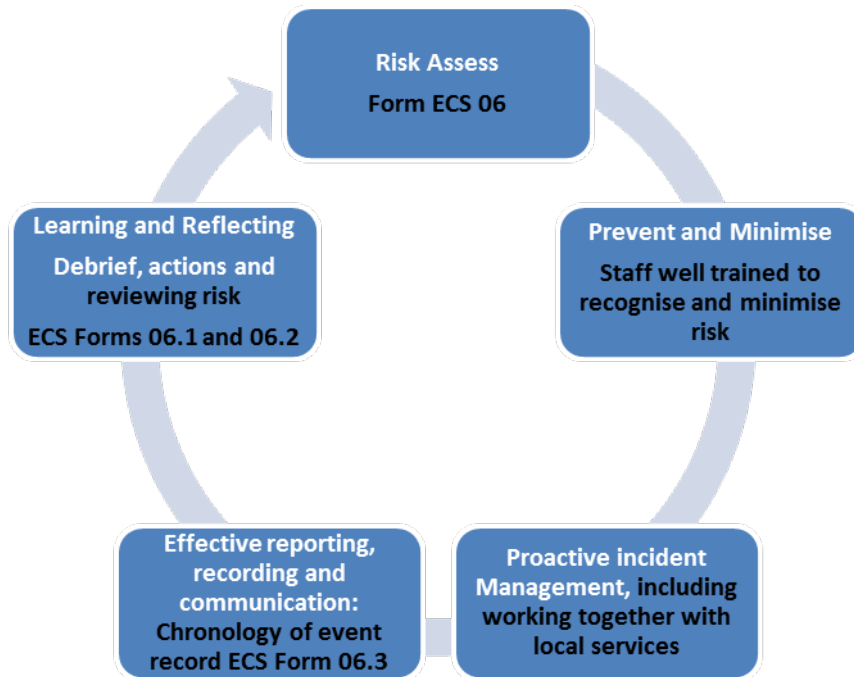
12 REFERENCES

12.1 DfE Statutory Guidance on Children Who Run Away or Go Missing January 2014
OfSTED Missing Children February 2013
Section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1070
Working Together to Safeguard Children and related statutory guidance 2013
Missing Children and Adult Strategy 2013
Safeguarding Children and Young people for sexual exploitation 2009
Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan 2011
Care Standards Act 2000, Children Act 2004
Children's Homes Regulations 2015
DfE (2015) Residential Special Schools: National minimum standards
Scottish Government (2005) National Care Standards: School Care Accommodation Services
Welsh Assembly Government (2002) National Minimum Standards for Children's Homes
Welsh Assembly Government (2003) National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools
DfE (2016) Keeping Children Safe in Education
DfE (2012) Screening, Searching and Confiscation: Advice for head teachers, staff and governing bodies
Children Missing Education - Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (September 2016)
National Minimum Standards: Accommodation of students under 18 by FE Colleges: 2002
Children's Homes Wales Regulations: 2002
National Minimum Standards – Children's Homes, Wales, 2002
Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations 2015
CQC Guidance for Providers on meeting regulations: 2015
Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014
Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations: 2014

Associated Forms and Documents:

ECS Form 06: Running Away or Missing Risk Assessment
ECS Form 06A: Running Away or Missing Critical Incident Review
ECS Form 06B: Running Away or Missing Debrief Report
H&S (ES) Form 95: Local Area Risk Assessment
ECS Form 06C: Running Away or Missing Chronology of Events
ECS Form 06D: Running Away or Missing Individual Chronology
ECS SD 16G: Running Away/Missing Focus Group Terms of Reference