



Missing from Home, Care, Education and/or Health protocol

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1. Introduction and Legislative Framework

This protocol is published by the Enfield Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB) and is based on the following legislative guidance

- [Children Act 1989](#) Section 49, 50, 51.
- [The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations](#) Vol 1, 4.88, 4.91.
- [The Children Act 2004](#) Section 10 (1) (2).
- [DfE Statutory Guidance on children who run away and go missing from home or care January 2014.](#)
- [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015.](#)
- [London Child Protection Procedures Children Missing from Care, Home and School 2013.](#)
- [ACPO interim guidance on 'Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons', 2013.](#)
- [Safeguarding Children Who May Have Been Trafficked 2011.](#)
- [Education Act 2002](#) S175/157
- [Education 2005](#) S116
- [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#) s 4
- [Keeping children safe in education 2015](#)
- [Children Missing from Education Statutory Guidance 2013](#)

1.1. Purpose of this protocol

The purpose of this protocol is to assist practitioners across all agencies to develop a robust response to children and young people who are missing. This will include preventing the child suffering harm and if necessary, recovering them to a place of safety as soon as possible. **It is expected that all agencies working with children who are missing from home, care, education or health will implement this protocol and ensure their staff are aware of it.** The protocol is designed to ensure accurate data recording and information sharing which supports local working arrangements between the relevant agencies involved in developing this including:

- Schools and Children's Services
- Metropolitan Police
- Health agencies
- Public Health

1.2. Scope of the protocol

This protocol covers children and young people under the age of 18 (up to 25 for children with disabilities/SEN and Care Leavers) including:

- Children who are missing from home.
- Children who are missing from education.
- Children who are missing from care (including residential care homes).
- Children who are missing from health (Enfield health agencies).

The guidance in this document should not be read in isolation. Additional guidance as outlined in Section 1 should be followed alongside this document and is particularly significant when working with missing children who are at risk of:

- Child Sexual Exploitation.
- Domestic Abuse.
- Self Harm.
- Involvement in criminal activity or drugs.
- Children with disabilities.

Other Enfield Safeguarding Children Board protocols and guidance can be found on the [ESCB website](#).

2. Principles

- 2.1. This protocol has been agreed between Enfield Schools and Children's Services, Enfield Police and Enfield health agencies.
- 2.2. It will operate under the following principles:
 - Every missing episode is potentially serious.
 - The aim is to reduce the incidence of all children and young people going missing.
 - When a child or young person does go missing our joint aim is to prevent them suffering harm and to recover them to safety as soon as possible.
 - We do this by partnership working, information sharing, problem solving, and performance management.
 - A child or young person's concerns will be taken seriously.
 - Interventions are important in attempting to address repeat missing episodes and must be informed by effective return interviews with children.
 - Interventions may be focused at the individual child or young person, their parents, the care establishment or by targeting 'pull' factors in the community.

3. Operating Procedures

3.1. Children who go missing from Home (parental address)

(See Appendix A for Quick Reference Flowchart)

- 3.1.1. Parents (and carers) are expected to undertake the basic measures to try to locate their child or young person if considered safe to do so:
 - Search bedroom / house / outbuildings / vehicles
 - Contact known friends and relatives where child/ young person may be
 - Visit locations that the child is known to frequent, if it is safe to do so.
- 3.1.2. Parents and anyone who has care of a child or young person without parental responsibility should take all reasonable steps to locate the child or young person and ascertain their safety. It would be considered a reasonable step for parents to inform the police that their child or young person is missing.
- 3.1.3. Anyone who has care of a child or young person without parental knowledge or agreement should do what is reasonable to safeguard and promote the child's or young person's welfare. In these circumstances, they should inform the police, Enfield Schools and Children's Services (via the Single Point of Entry (SPOE)) and the parents of the child/young person of their whereabouts and safety. If this is not complied with, the Police could consider advice or warning under the Child Abduction Act, if appropriate.

- 3.1.4. Parents / Carers are expected / advised to contact the Police when young people go missing
- 3.1.5. Police Public Protection Desk (PPD) will check to see if the young person is open to Children's Social Care and if so will send information directly
- 3.1.6. The Police complete a Form 78 which is sent securely to social care and entered onto the system as a 'Missing episode'. This creates a Missing Flag.
- 3.1.7. When it comes to the attention of Children's Social Care that a **known** child is missing, if the young person is subject to a Child Protection plan; a **Need to know** form must be completed immediately and a Strategy Meeting convened, usually within 24 hours depending on age and vulnerability and always within 7 days. Liaison will take place between Police, Social Care and other agencies as required. If the young person is a Child in Need there may be a similar response depending on age and vulnerability. A senior manager (Head of Service or above) must always be informed.
- 3.1.8. A risk assessment should be completed and action by the police will include:
- An active and measured response by police and other agencies in order to trace the missing child and support the person reporting;
 - A proactive investigation and search in accordance with the circumstances to locate the missing child as soon as possible;
 - Family support should be put in place;
 - The UK Missing Persons Bureau should be notified of the case;
 - CEOP and children's social care services should be notified.
- 3.1.9. When a Young Person returns home the Police will visit to conduct a **Safe and Well interview** and complete a PAC which will be sent to Children's Social Care.
- 3.1.10. The named Social Worker is the lead professional.
- 3.1.11. The young person should be offered an independent debriefing return interview. A referral to **St Christopher's Young Runaways** Service can be made by the Social Worker and they will conduct an 'independent return interview'. Information from the interview is passed back to the Social Worker. A debriefing return interview should **not** be carried out by a parent/carer or social worker unless the young person wishes this to be the case.
- 3.1.12. In the event that a child/young person who is not open to Children's Social Care goes missing on **three** occasions a referral will be sent from the SPOE to Children's Social Care and an Assessment will be undertaken. However, if a high level of risk and/or vulnerability is identified a referral should be made at an earlier stage. Once the case is open to Social Care the process as detailed above from 3.1.7, should be followed.
- 3.1.13. If at any point Child Sexual Exploitation is suspected then the CSE 'SAFEGUARD' Screening Tool should be completed and a referral will be made to the Police via an 87A form. (This will trigger a referral to MASE)
- 3.1.14. Missing episodes and related information will be discussed at the Child Protection conferences / CIN Reviews and appropriate amendments to the Child's Plan will be made.
- 3.1.15. Where there are ongoing concerns relating to children/young people going missing from home a referral should be made to the **Missing Children Risk Management Group**.

3.2. **Children who go missing from Education - Principles**

3.2.1. Certain groups of vulnerable children are more likely than others to go missing from education:

- Young people who have committed offences
- Children living in women's refuges
- Children of homeless families, perhaps living in temporary accommodation
- Young runaways
- Children with long-term medical or emotional problems
- Looked After children
- Children with a gypsy/traveller background
- Young carers
- Children with transient families
- Teenage mothers
- Children who are permanently excluded from school
- Migrant children, whether in families seeking asylum or economic migrants
- Trafficked children

3.2.2. Enfield Council has a Children Missing from Education (CME) Officer and a system of recording and notification in relation to children who are known to be missing education.

3.2.3. Local authorities are required to track, locate and ensure access to education for children who:

- have never accessed education (have neither enrolled at a school, nor received education otherwise than at school since reaching statutory school age);
- leave educational provision without a confirmed education destination, and/or fail to access a school place when moving to a new area;
- fail to transfer between a new key stage (for instance the Early Years Foundation Stage to Year 1, Year 2 to Year 3 or Year 6 to Year 7);
- have been withdrawn by the parent/carer from the education system (in accordance to the Home Education Protocol);
- belong to a mobile or transient population.

3.2.4. All children identified as Children Missing from Education need to be monitored and tracked until the local authority can show that they have:

- been allocated a place at a school, or suitable alternative education provision;
- reached a destination in another authority and that the new local authority is aware and investigating.
- all reasonable checks have been satisfactorily conducted

3.3. **Children who go missing from Education – Operating Protocol**

(See Appendix B for Quick Reference Flowchart)

3.3.1. Where a child resident in Enfield is believed to be missing from education, any council department, partner agency, or individuals in contact with the child, are expected to make a referral, to the Children Missing Education Coordinator.

These may include:

- School Attendance Service,
- Truancy Patrols, Police,
- Health service,

- Housing and Benefits Services,
- Police,
- voluntary and community groups,
- Youth Service,
- parents and members of the public,
- other Local Authorities,
- other education providers.

3.3.2. When a child does not take up the allocated place at a school i.e. reception intake, Y6 to Y7 transition, or casual admission, the school will make all reasonable attempts to contact the family before referring the matter to the Education Welfare Officer, who may subsequently refer to the Children Missing Education Coordinator.

3.3.3. Children Leaving Enfield

Generally, children leaving the borough have a known educational destination. Schools use the School to School (S2S) system to exchange information between local authority areas. In these cases, no action is taken by the local authority.

3.3.4. It is the duty of the head teacher, school staff and school governing body to identify and refer any child leaving with no confirmed forwarding address, destination or educational provision, or children who fail to attend school after an unauthorised leave of absence, the school/education provider

3.3.5. The school should make initial enquiries by telephoning the family, or any other designated emergency contact number available. Where phone numbers are not available, a letter should go to the family's last known address requesting contact and confirmation of the child's whereabouts.

If these checks fail, referral should be made to the Education Welfare Service (EWS) who will:

- advise the school how to proceed on removing a child from the roll
- refer the case to the Children Missing Education Officer if the child remains missing from education

3.3.6. If the child has a potential (or probable) education destination, this information will be recorded on the Children Missing Education database. The Children Missing Education Coordinator can then monitor the safe arrival in the named destination.

3.3.7. If there is an existing Social Care referral for the child, or siblings, then the lead professional, or Team, must be contacted. If the child, or siblings, has a Child Protection Plan, or is a Child in Need, the allocated social worker must be contacted immediately.

3.3.8. When the family is not known at the last address given

If enquiries provide no new information, or the pupil cannot be confirmed on roll at a school (or alternative education provision), or the pupil is not in receipt of suitable education otherwise than at school, the attendance officer may advise the school that it may remove the child from the school roll after no fewer than 20 days unauthorised absence, following all reasonable enquiries to locate him or her, however the following exceptions apply:

- children who are looked after. These children should be referred to the Virtual School Head Teacher;

- children who have a Statement of Special Education Needs. These children should be referred to the Special Educational Needs Team (SEN).

In all other cases the discharging school will be advised by EWS to:

- clearly record all actions taken, and efforts to trace the child before referring the case to the Children Missing Education Officer;
- pass all information to the Children Missing Education coordinator

3.3.9. The Children Missing Education coordinator will:

- record and maintain the child's details on the Missing Child section of the database;
- undertake all relevant agency and systems checks;
- maintain accurate records of interventions;
- make a referral to the SPOE
- refer the case to the **Missing Children Risk Management Group** when all routes to locate the child have been exhausted.

3.3.10. When enquiries confirm the pupil is on roll at a new school out of borough

Regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (Appendix 1) prescribe the grounds on which the name of a pupil of compulsory school age can be deleted from the admission register. When a pupil is deleted from the admission register the school must clearly indicate the date and the reason for removal from roll.

3.3.11. In accordance schools are required to update their management information system (MIS) as soon as the child is removed from roll. An electronic Common Transfer File (CTF) of the pupil's school records should be generated and sent to the new school via the School to School (S2S) secure transfer site.

3.3.12. Children who move abroad

If a Child in Need, or one subject to a Child Protection Plan leaves the UK, the allocated social worker will be responsible for contacting their counterpart and/or the police authority in the relevant countries.

3.3.13. If significant concerns persist, and the whereabouts of a child remains unknown; a referral must be made immediately to Social Care to avoid any risk of significant harm.

3.3.14. Procedures where a child missing from education is not found

If, after all enquiries have been exhausted, the child's whereabouts remains unknown, the referrer will be informed (where appropriate) and the case will be recorded as closed, following a multi-agency discussion (and decision) at the **Missing Children Risk Management Group**. The only exception to this is in the case of children looked after by the local authority. These cases remain open indefinitely until the child is found.

3.3.15. The electronic records will be maintained on the DfE School to School National Pupil Database (Lost Pupils' Database).

3.4. **Children who go missing from Care**

- 3.4.1. Every child or young person should have a care plan based on a full assessment of the child or young person's current and future needs, including potential **risk** to self or others. The care plan will, therefore, take account of any risk that the child or young person may go missing in future and any factors which may increase the risk to them should they go missing. Children's residential and fostering service staff should contribute to this assessment. All information should be included in the placement plan and in the child or young person's care plan. As part of this assessment it may be appropriate for Enfield Schools and Children's Services to consult with the police to share information that may be of relevance. It may be necessary to notify other safeguarding partners if there is a likelihood that the child or young person might go missing from another setting (e.g. hospital), and what action they must take if this occurs.
- 3.4.2. In the event of an emergency placement, the placement plan must analyse risk. In the absence of a placement plan, the known basic information on the child or young person should be recorded and risk assessed.
- 3.4.3. The care plan will remain in the possession of Enfield Schools and Children's Services. It is not a public document. It is not envisaged that the police will need to view the care plan at any time. However, there may well be circumstances when it is necessary to involve the police in aspects of the care planning process to safeguard the child or young person.
- 3.4.4. A recent photograph bearing a good likeness to the child or young person should be kept on record by Enfield Schools and Children's Services. When a child or young person is admitted to care the consent of a person with parental responsibility will be sought for a photograph to be used in any subsequent missing person investigation. If possible, the agreement of the child or young person should also be gained.

Planning before any incident

- 3.4.5. Enfield Schools and Children's Services and carers should adopt a consistent approach to the planning and assessment of "looked after children"
- 3.4.6. Where there is a likelihood that a child or young person in care may go missing from their established placement, their placement plan, completed by their key worker should include an assessment of that likelihood and the **risks** they may face as a consequence.
- 3.4.7. Children's homes and fostering service staff should contribute to this assessment and review it after every incident of the child or young person going missing. All information should be included in the placement plan and in the child's care plan. This assessment should include information on the following:
- the likelihood of the child or young person going missing
 - the child or young person's view
 - the level of supervision / support that care staff propose to provide for the child or young person
 - the views of parents / carers on their child's needs and the action that needs to be taken if the child or young person is absent
 - the risk of harm to the child or young person and his/ her vulnerability if he/ she is absent
 - Consideration of any external influences that may result in a child or young person's removal without consent.
 - The likelihood of the child or young person being harboured.

- 3.4.8. The child or young person should have this protocol explained to him/ her and the potential dangers that they may encounter so that s/he understands the implication of being absent without authority, running away and / or going missing.
- 3.4.9. The child/young person's Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) is required to monitor the effectiveness of the looked after child or young person's Care Plan and therefore must be made aware that a child has gone, or may, go missing. The child or young person's IRO must be informed if a child or young person goes missing, what steps have been taken to find them, and when found the circumstances of this. If necessary it may be appropriate for the IRO to reconvene the Looked After Child Review.
- 3.4.10. As a preventive strategy, consideration should be given to appointing an Independent Visitor for the child or young person. This should not be the sole consideration in appointing an Independent Visitor but if one is appointed then their role could include befriending the child or young person, which may help to prevent them going missing. If the child or young person does go missing the Independent Visitor might be an appropriate person, as an alternative to the usual arrangements, to undertake the Return Interview

3.5. **Children who go missing from Care – Operating Protocol**
(See Appendix C for Quick Reference Flowchart)

- 3.5.1. The residential or semi-independent unit or foster carer will contact the police and Emergency Duty Team (EDT) if a Young Person goes missing.
- 3.5.2. Foster carers will be given guidance from the out of hours fostering Duty Team if required.
- 3.5.3. The Police complete a Form 78 which is sent securely to social care and entered onto the system as a 'Missing episode'. This creates a Missing Flag.
- 3.5.4. If there are concerns regarding vulnerability the EDT will liaise with the police. They will consider if there are Child Protection concerns and/or if there CSE or Mental health issues and will act accordingly in conjunction with the police (both Borough Police and the CAIT)
- 3.5.5. A **Need to Know** document will be completed immediately and sent to senior managers
- 3.5.6. Throughout the investigation, Enfield Schools and Children's Services and Enfield Police will continually review the case. After the child or young person has been missing for **5** days Enfield Schools and Children's Services, in consultation with the Police, will convene a Section 47 multi-agency Strategy Meeting. This will involve Police Officers, carers, the child or young person's social worker, and any other care professional involved in the care of the child or young person.

The meeting will review:

- What action has been taken so far by the Police and care professionals;
- What action needs to be taken by the Police and care professionals;
- Decide whether the child or young person should return to that placement when located;
- Consider any other relevant information.

Further strategy meetings will take place at least every **7** days thereafter or earlier, if deemed appropriate.

- 3.5.7. If the young person remains missing the case will be discussed at Placement Panel to consider further action such as a Legal Planning Meeting (LPM) or legal action if child's whereabouts is known. This is usually ongoing on a 2 weekly timescale.
- 3.5.8. If the whereabouts are known or suspected, it is the responsibility of Enfield Schools and Children's Services to arrange for the child or young person's return. However, there will be circumstances when, in the interests of the safe and speedy return of the child or young person, the Police may assist.
- 3.5.9. It is the responsibility of the carer to contact the Police by telephone and to confirm that the missing child or young person has returned to the home. The Police will accept confirmation from care professionals without the need for an officer to attend the home, and the Missing Report will be cancelled on the Police National Computer. Police will visit the returnee as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter to conduct a Safe and Well Check. This will lead to the Police closing the Missing Person investigation. The young person's reasons for going missing will be discussed and the Police will contact the Social Worker. The named Social Worker is the lead professional.
- 3.5.10. If it is apparent, upon the return of a child or young person, that they have been the victim of a crime whilst absent, or that they may be in danger or at risk from any person arising out of circumstances that have occurred whilst they were absent, then the Police must be notified immediately. This is vital for the protection of the child or young person and for the speedy recovery of evidence.
- 3.5.11. In such circumstances, the missing person's clothing (including underwear), mobile phone and trace evidence from their body, fingernails or hair may be crucial. In cases of sexual abuse the child or young person should be discouraged from washing and immediate advice sought from the Police. If carers become aware of the location of the scene of any crime committed against the child, or of the location of any crucial evidence (i.e. a used condom) they must notify the Police without delay. This will enable the police to take steps to secure and preserve evidence.
- 3.5.12. Social Workers must refer to **St Christopher's Young Runaways Service** to conduct a debriefing return interview in all cases. The visit must be made within 72 hours of the young person returning home. In exceptional circumstances, notably when the placement is a long way from Enfield, this may not be adhered to, in which case there must be a note on the case file and the relevant Enfield manager with case responsibility notified as soon as possible.
- 3.5.13. A debriefing return interview should **not** be carried out by a parent/carers, social worker or a member of staff from the residential or semi-independent unit unless the young person wishes this to be the case.
- 3.5.14. For both in and out of borough placements the allocated social worker is to visit as soon as possible after the child returns home. The social worker should refer to the debrief information in order to inform them in respect of the focus for the discussion. If the child has regular missing episodes manager and social worker to discuss the plans for seeing the child and the decision to be recorded on the case file.
- 3.5.15. If there are regular missing reports there will be further discussion with managers and a formal risk assessment will be undertaken to consider how best to support the Young Person. The Risk Assessment to be recorded on the child's file by the manager.

3.5.16. If at any point Child Sexual Exploitation is suspected then a referral will be made to the Police via an 87A form. (This will trigger a referral to the Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation Meeting (MASE))

3.5.17. If required Statutory visits will be brought forward.

3.5.18. Missing episodes and related information will be discussed at the LAC review and appropriate amendment to the Care Plan will be made.

3.6. **Children who go missing from Health – Operating Protocol**

(See Appendix D for Quick Reference Flowchart)

3.6.1. Where a child known to Enfield health is no longer known at the address held by health agencies and no forwarding address is available to enable a transfer of child health provision (such as School Nursing/Health Visiting Service) all practical efforts will be taken in order to locate the child(ren).

3.6.2. This will include discussions with the GP, Midwifery services (where appropriate), Housing, School Nursing services, Child Health Departments, Children's Centres, Allied Health professionals, Mental Health Services and Social Care.

3.6.3. If the family remain missing from the known address, the practitioner will complete a **Missing from Known Address (MKA)** form and this will be sent to the registered GP practice. An alert will then be placed on the GP records accordingly. If the child is not registered with a GP, the alert should be added to the parent's records.

3.6.4. If a child has recently been transferred to Enfield but has had no contact with Enfield Health services, the practitioner must inform the **Named Nurse** in the originating borough for consideration of a referral to their local social care team.

3.6.5. A discussion should take place with the Children's Safeguarding Team (Enfield Community Services, BEH-MHT), who will support in tracing the family - liaising with the Missing Children Risk Management Group and performing NHS National Spine checks for an update of information, to facilitate locating the family in a timely manner.

3.6.6. Where there is concern for the welfare of the child or there are direct safeguarding concerns for the child(ren) in the family, a referral will be made to Single Point of Entry (SPOE) and a police welfare check will be considered by the SPOE team. This will be done in consultation with the health representative in SPOE and the Children's Safeguarding Team (ECS).

3.6.7. Where there are safeguarding concerns and the family is missing from known address, the Designated Professional will be informed and consider presenting the case at the **Missing Children Risk Management Group**.

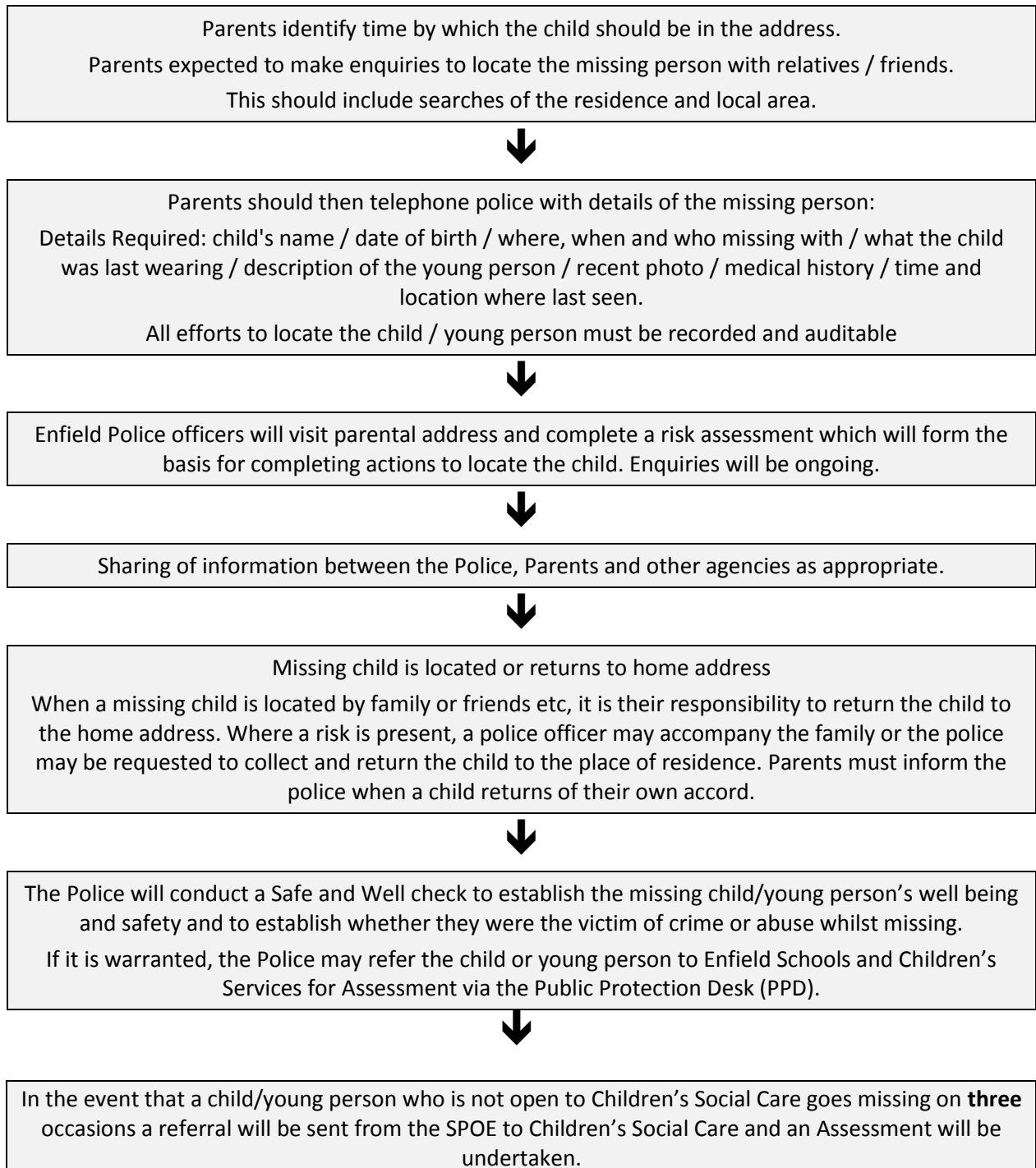
4. **Monitoring the effectiveness of the Protocol**

4.1.1. Enfield Police will notify Enfield Schools and Children's Services of all reports of missing children or young persons in their area. In addition Enfield Schools and Children's Services will receive monthly data about all missing children and young people (with outcomes) in their area.

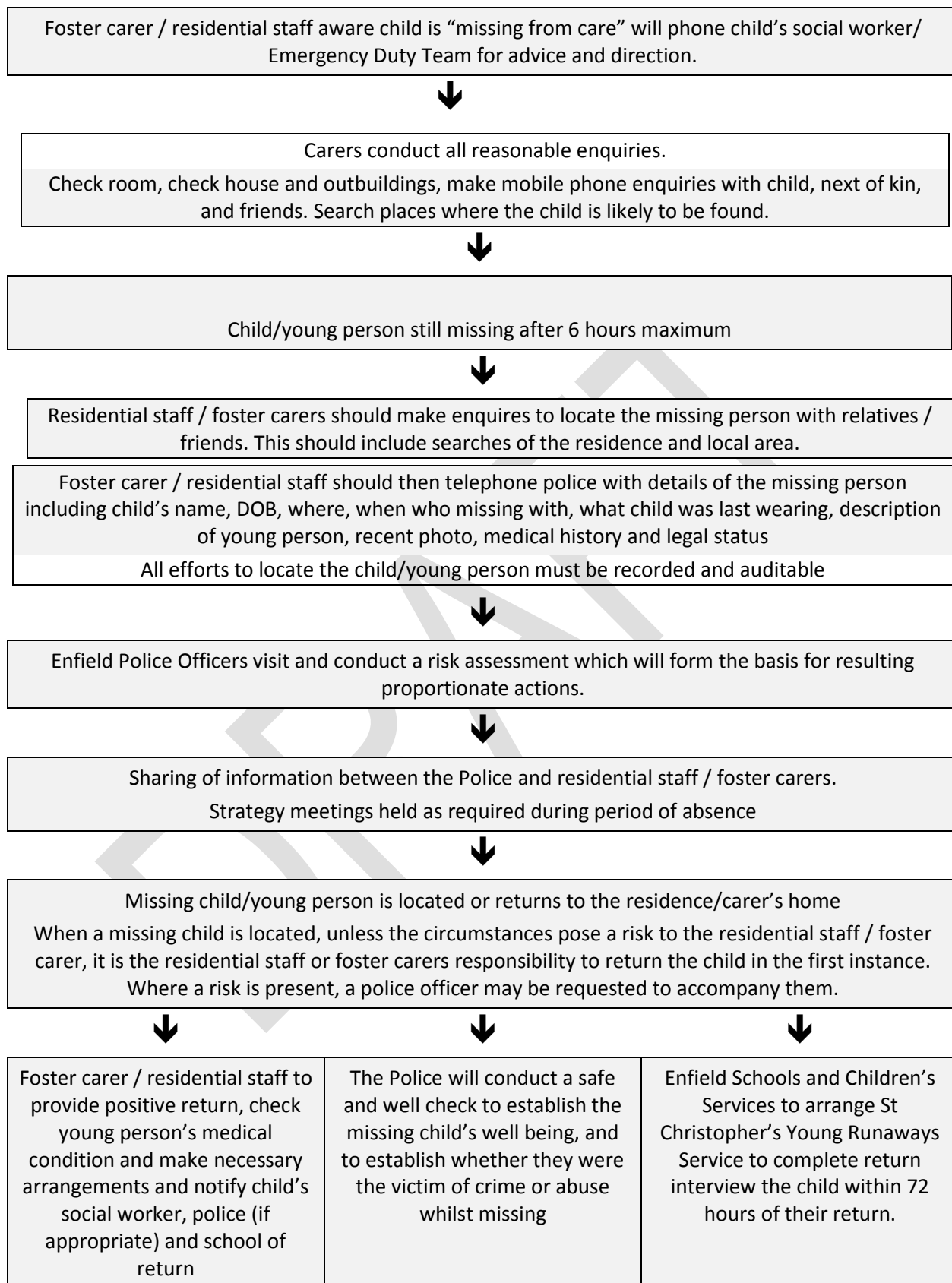
- 4.1.2. Enfield Safeguarding Children Board is responsible for using this data to identify patterns and trends and to develop preventative strategies to address these.
- 4.1.3. This protocol will be reviewed 12 months after implementation by senior managers from Enfield Police and Enfield Schools and Children's Services.

Appendices

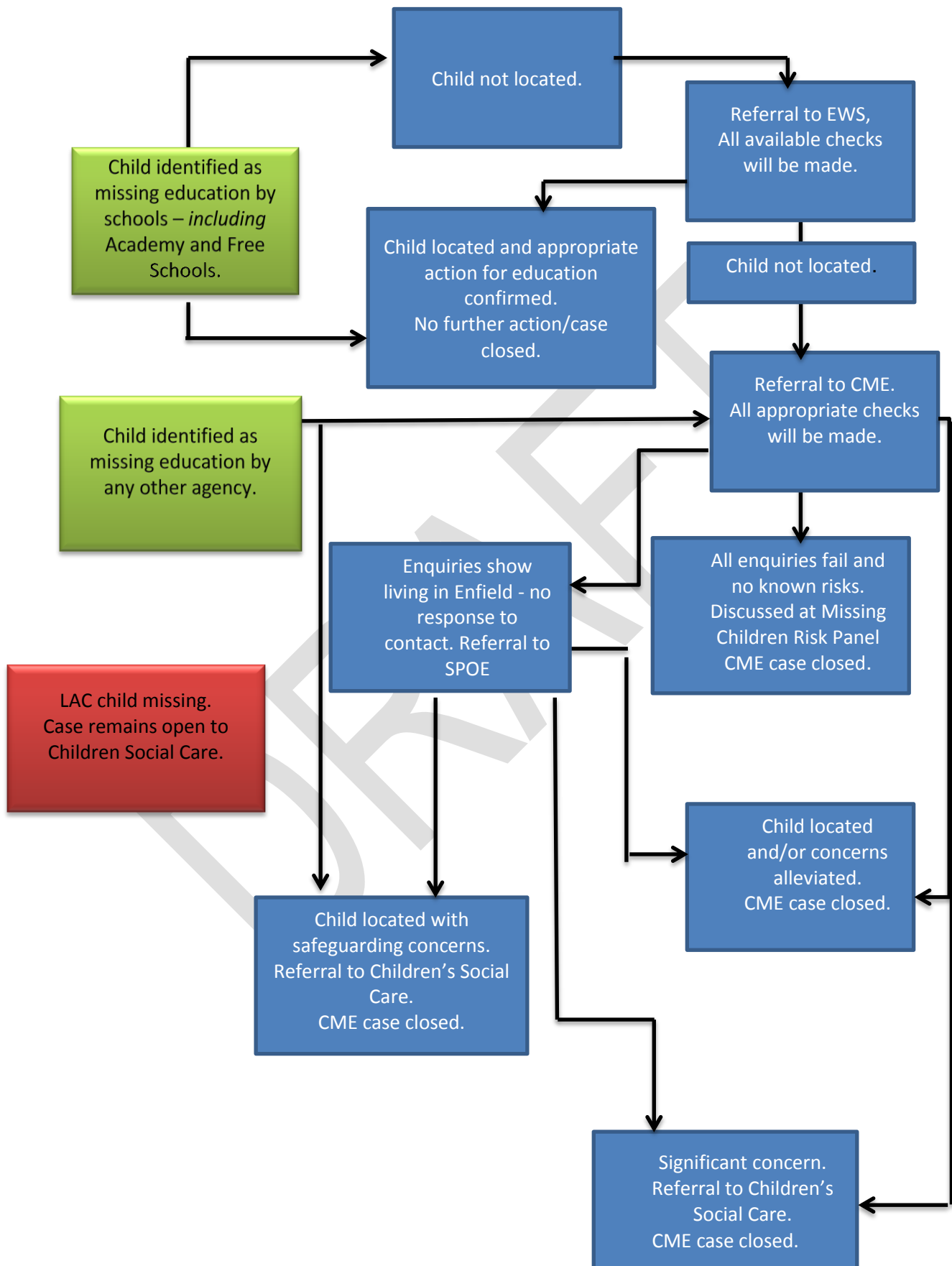
4.2. Appendix A: Quick Reference Guide – Missing from Home



4.3. Appendix B: Quick Reference Guide – Missing from Care



4.4. Appendix C: Quick Reference Guide – Missing from Education



4.5. Appendix D: Quick Reference Guide – Missing from Health

Practitioner identifies missing child through at least two unsuccessful visits to the family

Are there safeguarding concerns for the child(ren)?

YES

NO

All steps of the flow chart are applicable to children of all ages.

However, if the child is under 28 days, contact the community midwives to establish if contact has been made with the family, or if family address has changed.

Contact the GP to establish if child has been seen and if details are current and up to date.

If child is known to Social Care, contact Social Worker to establish if child has been seen recently, and for update on family's current address – To share information regarding no access visits.

Contact relevant services if involved with the family for further information-

- Birth registrar (if child under 3 months)- **020 8379 1000**
- Housing
- School Nursing Service (if applicable)
- Child Health Department
- Children's Centres
- Allied Health professionals, such as OT, SALT & Dieticians
- Mental health Service

Complete DATIX
Contact the Child Protection Safeguarding Team on **0208 702 5600** to inform of missing child.

Safeguarding Team to create action plan and consider referral to social care and police welfare check.

All steps of the flow chart are applicable to children of all ages.

However, if the child is under 28 days, contact the community midwives / discharging hospital to establish if contact has been made with the family, or if family address has changed.

Contact the GP to establish if child has been seen and if details are current and up to date.

Contact relevant services if involved with the family for further information -

- Birth registrar(if child under 3 months) **020 8379 1000**
- Housing
- School Nursing Service (if applicable)
- Child Health Department
- Children's Centres
- Allied Health professionals, such as OT, SALT & Dieticians
- Mental health Services or any relevant service who are working with the family.

If family have moved to an unknown address, information to be passed to clerks and address unknown to be updated on Rio if no further information available.

GP to be informed of inability to contact family and alert to be registered with GP via letter template