

Lancashire County Council Children's Services

Subject	Protocol and Process for Missing from Home Panel
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TERMS OF REFERENCE

Introduction

In order to strengthen our arrangements for missing children we are developing a Missing from Home Panel to ensure that responses to individual children are consistent and effective in preventing them going missing in future and ensuring their safety.

This process will work alongside the current [*Pan Lancashire Joint Protocol September 2014 for Children and Young People who Go Missing from Home or Care*](#) and should be read in context with this protocol.

Aims

This guidance sets out the arrangement for a multi-agency panel which will consider children and young people who:

- Repeatedly go missing/absent (reported or unreported)
- Remain missing
- Are identified as at risk of exploitation while missing
- Are also frequently missing from education

The key task of the Missing from Home Panel is to ensure that there is a system for professionals with continuing concerns about children who are missing from home to effectively share and evaluate information and ensure multi-agency planning to locate the child and prevent future incidents.

Additional to this is for the multi-agency partnership to develop a comprehensive understanding of the thematic issues in regards to missing children in the central Lancashire area including places and persons of concern, activity when missing and associations. This can then support the partnership where to direct intervention and resources within the community to address risk for missing children.

Objectives

- Share information on children who are missing from home and cause professional concerns about their safety and welfare.
- Risk assess missing children, including the possibilities of modern slavery (trafficking and exploitation).
- Consider actions in respect of children who repeatedly go missing.

- Consider the risks to children and young people who also frequently miss education.
- Identify thematic issues in regards to vulnerability and risk e.g hot spots, associations, criminality/ASB and adults of concern.
- Determine whether the children/young person's pose a risk to themselves or the community
- Improve support to professionals working with high risk cases through multi-agency overview and guidance on effective planning.
- Quality assurance of existing plans and intervention in regards to missing episodes and ensure an effective partnership approach.
- Promote and safeguard the welfare of children and young people

Chair

The Panel will be chaired by the relevant Children's Social Care Senior Manager, and the deputy will be a Senior Officer from the Police at Detective Inspector level.

The role of the chair is to structure the meetings and prioritise cases to ensure the best use of the time of attending agencies. Should the chair be unable to attend, a deputy chair will run the meeting.

The chair will ensure that all attendees understand the risks and what actions are being agreed and how they relate to their agencies.

The chair will review actions at the previous meeting and make a record of any outstanding actions.

Membership of the Group

The following agencies will attend as standing members:

- Police Missing Person's Co-Ordinator(s)
- Neighbourhood police (NHP)
- Police Child Exploitation team
- Children's Social Care Senior Manager
- Children's Social Care Missing from Home Lead
- Residential Care Service
- SEND
- Education Missing Persons Officer
- Children, Families and Well Being Service
- Health CLA Nurse
- Youth Offending Team
- The Children's Society (MfH Service Manager)
- Community Safety Team Manager
- Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Manager
- Licensing Child Protection Officer
- CSC Missing from Home Support Workers

Should the designated representative not be able to attend a meeting, then a briefed deputy should be asked to attend in their place.

The responsibility to take appropriate action rests with individual agencies. It is not transferred to the Panel. The role of the Panel is to facilitate, monitor, quality assure

Information and Data Sharing

Data sets will be submitted to the panel to identify current issues, areas of concern and accuracy of shared data. This will inform needs analysis for partner agencies and interventions.

Where certain persons not signed up to the Panel Information Sharing Protocols may need to be informed of certain facts, the decision to share information in these circumstances will be referred back to the Panel under the confidentiality declaration.

Threshold for referring to the Panel

Initially the Panel will consider a wide range of children in respect of missing from home/care. This will enable the panel to develop a clear picture of the areas of concern in respect of this group of young people. As the panel develops it will become the remit of the panel to concentrate on the significant issues raised and to address these via the panel.

Suggested guidance for children to be considered for panel–

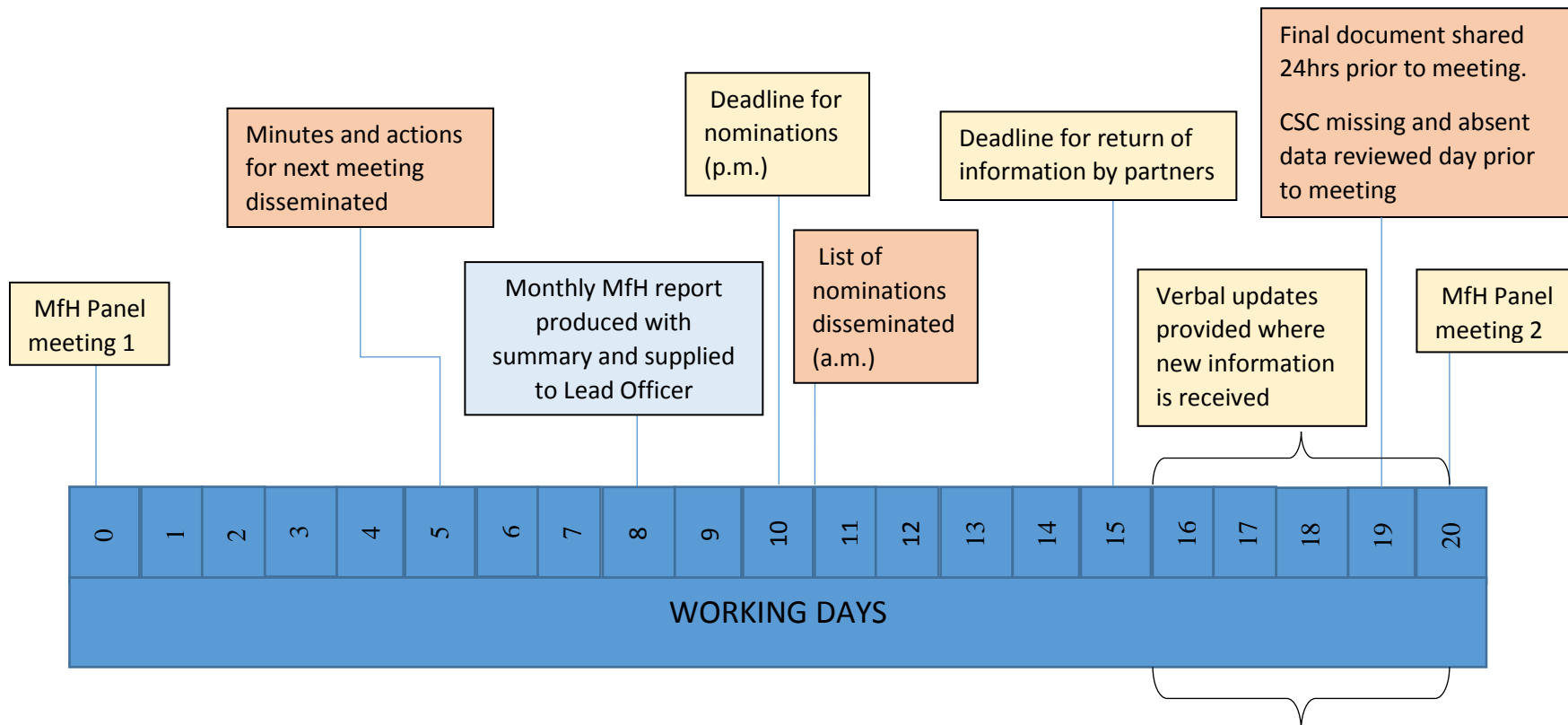
- **Professional judgement**– where there are professional concerns for believing the child is in danger through their own vulnerability. If a professional has serious concerns about a child's situation in regards to missing from home, they should forward the case for consideration at the panel. Considerations should be given to potential modern slavery including - trafficking, sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, honour based violence and forced marriage. Also concerns with gang related activity and radicalisation.
- **Duration and frequency of missing episodes** – child who has been missing for longer than 48 hours and/or are frequently missing/absent. This includes children where there are strong suspicions that the child is missing and unreported.
- **Escalation** – children who's missing episodes are increasing or longer in duration. Changes in behaviour prior to or following the missing episodes.
- **Early Concerns** – this will be particularly relevant in the early stages of the Panel whilst we are identifying the significant issues around MFH in Lancashire.

THE MEETING PROCESS - process for nominating cases for consideration at Panel.

- All partners
- CSC CSE Data Officer
- CSC MfH Lead Officer

The timeline below assumes that MfH panel meetings will broadly be held in the middle of a month. This then allows for the calendar monthly report to be provided between panel meetings.

All emails from partners should be sent to cseadministration@lancashire.gov.uk



Urgent referrals for panel accepted at panels discretion, send to cseadministration@lancashire.gov.uk with a subject of "Urgent MfH panel referral".

All Panel partners can nominate names of children they identify as in need for the multi-agency panel overview.

These names are to be submitted to the Panel coordinator **10** working days prior to panel with a basic overview of the reasons for the referral.

The Panel coordinator will then send out the names of children to be discussed for research to be undertaken by each individual agency.

This is then to be forwarded to the Panel coordinator and minute taker no later than **5** days prior to the Panel.

Information required from agencies for Panel:

Only accurate information that is directly relevant to the safety of the child or young person should be shared at the Panel. This includes;

- Information on number of missing/absent episodes, duration, activity, risks and information following the incident (e.g. information from police logs and Safe and Well checks, Return Interviews from Social Care).
- Summary of child history and interventions and overview of current situation.
- Whether there has been an identified trigger for missing from home episodes and push/pull factors.
- Pertinent information on child's relational, physical and emotional needs and whether these are being met.
- Information on key risks
- Details of associates and activity when missing including children and adults (names, age and addresses).
- Relevant intelligence (this will not be shared outside of the Panel and not to be stored electronically on any other agency file).
- Any relevant history of missing and actions/interventions by individual agencies with the child or family
- The voice of the child provided by the relevant agency/professionals working with the child
- Information from Return Home Interviews and any key risks identified. Current plan for the child (if open case) and information from Missing from Home Intervention Meetings.
- Any other relevant information

The Missing from Home Panel document is populated with information forwarded by partners. A decision is made by the Panel on a RAG rating and actions allocated. The actions and RAG rating are reviewed at each Panel meeting considering the current information and risks. A child will not be removed from the document until all actions have been completed and there has been no further missing from home or absent episodes.

This document will be shared with panel partners and each individual agency has responsibility to upload information on their own secure system for key involved professionals to be updated on risks and actions.

The Meetings

The meetings will be held monthly in various locations which will be communicated by Children's Social Care. This is co-ordinated alongside the monthly MACSE and therefore ensuring that children at high risk in regards to Missing from Home and CSE are discussed on a bi-weekly basis. The Children Missing Education panel is also held every 4 to 6 weeks and there will not be duplication of children between the three panels.

Minutes and Administration

The Panel minutes including a summary of the actions will be circulated within five working days of the meetings. The Children's Social Care action tracker will be updated at each meeting.

Developing an Action Plan

The Panel will identify specific risks to the victim before agreeing actions which will be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely).

Following a Panel meeting, partner agencies should notify the co-ordinator on completion of actions and any additional information. At the following Panel, any outstanding actions shall be noted and agencies asked to provide a verbal update as to the status of this action.

Emergencies

Any referrals where a child or young person is deemed at significant risk of harm should not wait for a Panel discussion, but should be dealt with under current Child Protection processes. If a child is missing for 48 hours or longer a Strategy Meeting under Section 47 should be arranged.