

**Children's Social Care O&S Committee  
25 July 2018**

**Children who go Missing**

In the last 12 months on average 107 children go missing a month within Birmingham. Some children have more than 1 missing episode. The average missing episodes for all children a month is 189. For each missing episode the Children's Trust offers a return home interview (RHI) to the child.

On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 Birmingham Children's Trust took over the direct provision of the return home interviews. Previously the local authority had contracted the service out to The Children's Society.

Staff previously conducting the interviews were TUPE'd over to The Trust. There are now 3.4 missing support workers, who are part of an expanded CSE/Missing team in the Trust.

**Changes since March 2018**

**1. All Birmingham children are offered a RHI**

- All Birmingham children are offered a return home interview, including those placed outside of Birmingham. Previously only children living in Birmingham or within a 20 mile radius of Birmingham were being offered an interview.
- We are not currently offering children placed by other local authorities in Birmingham a return home interview. This is the responsibility of their home authority.

**2. Closer collaboration with social workers, exploitation co-ordinators and Police**

- The 3 full time members of staff are aligned to the 3 areas of South, East, and North, West & Central, enabling closer collaboration with social workers and child exploitation co-ordinators. This will be extended further by the missing support workers attending the new area MASE (multi-agency sexual exploitation) Panels from September 2018.
- We are working closely with the Police. All return home interview reports are sent to Partnerships (Police team). The intelligence is used by colleagues. Currently Partnerships are collating information around locations from these reports. The links with Locate (Police team) have been strengthened. Missing 72 hour strategy discussions are increasing; and regular discussions take

place around individual children. The Police and Trust have been working with children's placements to raise awareness around missing issues.

### **3. Increase in successful RHIs**

- The percentage of successful return home interviews has increased from the previous 12 month average of 35% – in April we achieved 44%, in May 58% and in June 50%. A successful return home interview is a face to face or telephone discussion where we engage the young person in a meaningful conversation about their missing episode.
- The data for offering and conducting return home interviews within 72 hours was not previously being collated. The data since 1 April 2018 has been collated and IT colleagues have been finalising the reports this month to provide this detail.

### **4. Increase in numbers of referrals arising out of RHIs**

- Subjectively we are seeing an increasing number of referrals coming out of the return home interviews that have led to Children's Advice and Support Service (CASS) opening up referrals; cases being stepped up from family support; and section 47 strategy discussions being held.

The Police have informed us that they will be amending their working practice around 'absent' children as of September 2018. The Police are currently quantifying the size of this change but it could see a large increase in the numbers of children classed as missing, as it will include those currently classed as 'absent'. Absence is a classification that West Midlands Police currently use for any person who is not deemed to be missing, but they are not where they should be.

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