



From mountain to sea

CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION

Practice Guidelines



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1 The Context

Partners across Aberdeenshire have in place an agreed Multi-agency Missing Persons Protocol to co-ordinate how we work when we believe a person is missing. Key objectives for that protocol include:

- Provide a consistent approach for the relevant agencies when a person is missing.
- Mitigate the risk to the people who go missing.
- Ensure that the multi-agency response delivers on the objectives contained within the National Framework.
- Set out the roles, responsibilities, and actions to be taken by each agency in respect of missing persons.
- Ensure that single agency protocols are reflected in this protocol and reflect the National Missing Persons Framework for Scotland and are subject to ongoing evaluation and review.
- Ensure that there is a shared understanding across agencies about risk assessment and management.

In Education, The Children Missing from Education (CME) guidance directs how we work when a child or young person is thought to be a child missing from education. This guidance links to the multi-agency protocol.

Every child or young person has the right to be safe and protected, and to feel safe and protected from any avoidable situation or acts which might result in that child being harmed.

All individuals who go missing are at risk of harm. However, for some individuals, this harm can be exacerbated by their circumstances

There is a responsibility on agencies with a duty of care for an individual, at the time of them going missing, to ensure that the Aberdeenshire Multi-Agency Missing Person's Protocol and the supporting Children Missing from Education Guidance, are followed.

Education staff have a key role to play in recognising actual or potential harm to a child, in sharing concerns and initial information gathering.

Children and young people may disappear from the view of schools and the Authority for many reasons. Our responsibility is to help maintain and support young people in Education and to take action where we believe their safety or wellbeing is at risk.

Where a child or young person appears to be missing from education, our first concern is for the safety of the child.

2 Is this a Child Protection Matter?

If there is any suspicion that the child is missing ie not at school or at home, or they are thought to be at risk, then Police and Social Work must be contacted.

A missing person is defined as anyone whose whereabouts are unknown and:

- Where the circumstances are out of character or,
- The context suggests the person may be subject to crime or,
- The person is at risk of harm to themselves or others

In all cases the first and most important factor to consider is the safety of the child or young person.

Should there be any concern that the child may be at risk then Child Protection procedures must be followed.

All children and young people who go missing are vulnerable. This could be a young person whose presence is totally unknown or who is going missing for parts of the day.

3 About the Guidelines

These guidelines set out the procedures to be followed by Education staff when a child is thought to be missing from Education. Where there is a concern for the safety of a child, Child Protection Procedures must be followed without delay.

4 Definition of Child Missing From Education

The term “Children missing from education” is defined as follows:

“Children ‘missing from education’ are children and young people:

- of compulsory school age
 - who may or may not be on a school roll, (Children who appear to be missing and are on a school roll should be kept on the school roll until their new location is found and confirmed).
 - and are not being educated otherwise (at home, privately or in an alternative provision).
 - They have usually not attended school for a period of time (up to four weeks but substantially less for a child with welfare concerns).
-

Core principles underpinning CME procedures:

- If there are concerns at any time about a child's whereabouts, safety or welfare, the school's designated Child Protection Officer should contact Social Work to pass on child protection concerns or the Police to pass on a Missing Person Concern.
- If a child's attendance ceases without explanation or prior notification of a move of school, the general non-attendance procedures apply and the relevant QIO activates a local investigation.
- If there is no contact after 28 days maximum in spite of enquiries, CME Procedures should be activated through the authority contact officer.

5 Child Missing From Education Flow Diagram and Checklist

The flow diagram and checklist guides staff through the CME process. The initial emphasis is on risk assessment and quickly identifying what is known about the child or young person, their history and current situation and whether they are believed to be missing.

Where the child or young person is thought to be at risk then Child Protection procedures should be followed without delay.

The flow diagram then guides schools through the CME process. Schools are reminded to maintain records of their search, any information gathered and decision making along the way.

Children Missing From Education Flow Diagram

Pupil Absent From School – no satisfactory explanation



Risk Assessment

Is the child thought to be missing or at risk?

For all nursery, primary age or high-risk or Medium-Risk young people, contact the Police on 999 and report them missing. Also see the Action card at Appendix 3.

Definitions

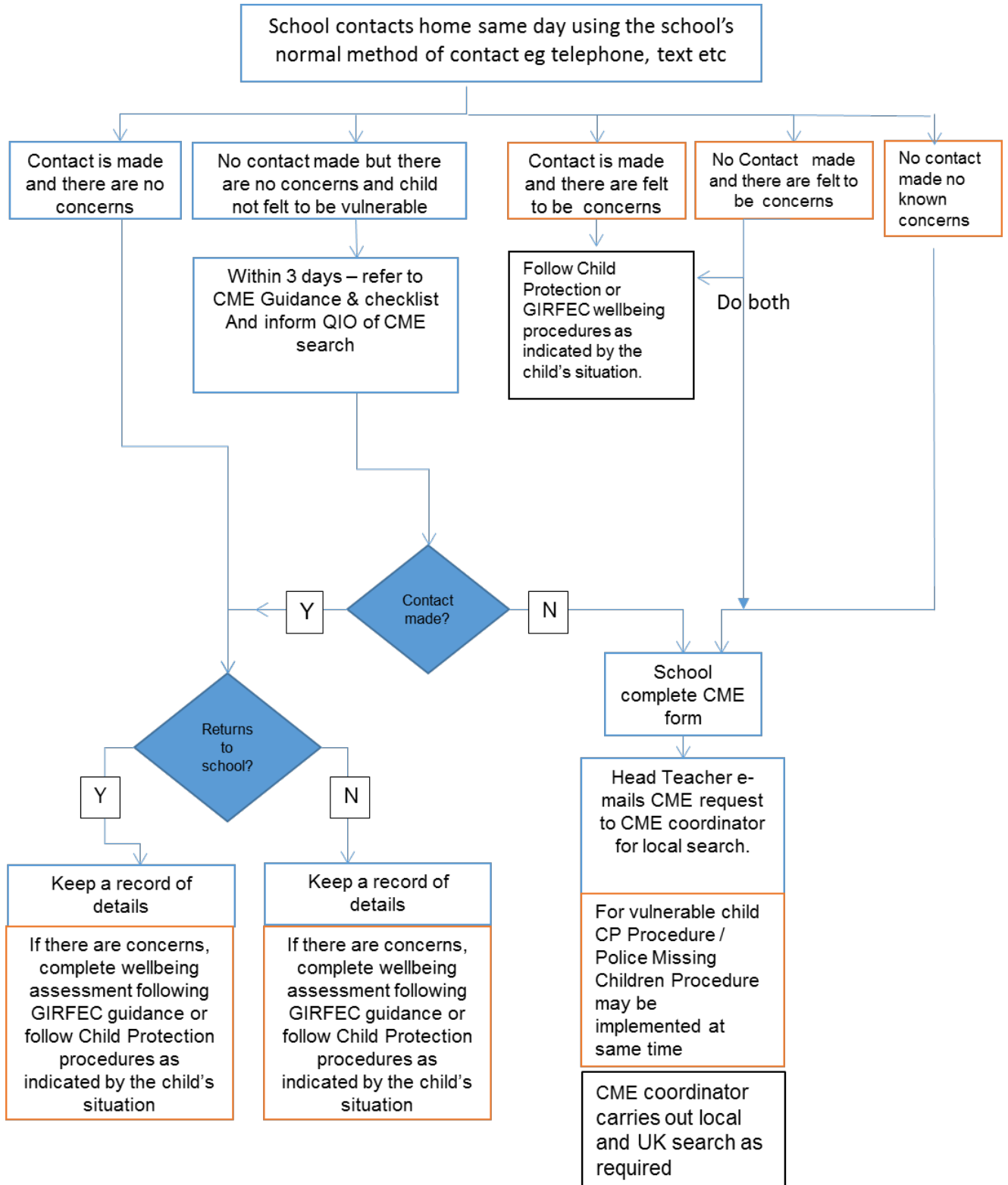
High Risk Missing young person: the risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the missing person is in danger through their own vulnerability, may have been a victim of a serious crime or the risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the public is in danger.

Medium Risk young person, is a young person likely to place themselves in danger or they are a threat to themselves or others.

Vulnerable Child: Some Examples

- Is on the Child Protection Register
- Is the subject of a child Protection investigation
- Is a Looked After of Accommodated Child
- has or is in the process of being referred to the Children's Panel
- has significant additional support needs
- has medical issues including mental health issues
- has a history of substance misuse personally and/or within the family
- at risk of FGM or forced marriage (Do not contact the family)
- at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation
- at risk of Child Trafficking
- has cultural issues
- is at the centre of a custody dispute

If the answer to the Risk Assessment questions is **No** then continue to follow the flow diagram and monitor for any information which might change the situation to a Child Protection matter.



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Use the checklist below as a guide to taking proportionate action, depending on the level of risk to the child and their vulnerability.

Steps the school should take where there is an unexplained absence and there are concerns about the child.

	Follow Risk Assessment guidance above
	The 'Request for a Search' form should be completed and sent to CME coordinator for a local search. It should also be sent to the Named Person and Lead Professional within 24 hours.

Otherwise

Steps the school should take after third day of no contact (or sooner if child has been identified as at risk) – Child Protection Procedures must be followed if the child is identified as at risk during the search process

<input type="checkbox"/>	Complete a GIRFEC wellbeing assessment
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contact attempted with home by phone, text, email, letter or other methods which have been successful in contacting the child and family in the past
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contact all emergency contact numbers (including parents'/carers' mobiles, other family members).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check what school staff know and check with siblings including in other schools via the Named Person.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contact made with parent/carer's last known employer.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Enquiries made with other children in class if appropriate. Consider confidentiality and sensitivity.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contact other services within Education and Children's Services as appropriate and request relevant information, e.g, CLD
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contact made with Social Work, Health Visitor as appropriate and other agencies – home visit may be appropriate.
<input type="checkbox"/>	If Police are contacted, the relevant QIO must be notified.
<input type="checkbox"/>	For children in a nursery 'Named Person' (Health Visitor).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check with school2school@aberdeenshire.gov.uk to see if the child has moved school within Aberdeenshire

Stage 2 – Database searches & Partner Agency Checks – Named Person (Head Teacher) should coordinate further searches and checks at local level

<input type="checkbox"/>	Request checks from SEEMIS using school2school@aberdeenshire.gov.uk to enable check to be carried out with Aberdeenshire schools.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check Health Visitor/School Nurse/GP Practice with whom child registered.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check with Housing as appropriate.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check with Social Work as appropriate.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check with Police as appropriate, Police Referral Unit can be contacted for discussion; Phone 101 if there are any concerns – Child Protection guidance should always be followed.

Stage 3 – Children Missing from Education wider search

<input type="checkbox"/>	Complete the 'Request for a Search' form . The Head Teacher should send this form to cme@aberdeenshire.gov.uk . The CME co-ordinator will start further procedures.
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6 Gypsy/Traveller Children

It is important to be aware of the diversity of lifestyles in Scotland which an inclusive education system must acknowledge and embrace. Gypsy / Travellers have a way of life which is diverse and may be different from that of other pupils. Flexibility and solution-focused approaches are essential in working effectively in the best interests of Gypsy / Traveller children. To ensure that they and their families do not become disengaged or alienated from the education system a reflective and sensitive approach is crucial.

It is important that schools develop a positive relationship with Gypsy / Traveller families and children which helps the school to be more aware of the family's lifestyle and what to do if a child moves on.

Information which can be useful when tracing a child may include the travelling patterns of the family, whether they are settled, family links and any places or areas the family might shift to when travelling.

Additional information to consider

<input type="checkbox"/>	Has the school been informed that the family is travelling? Refer to SEEMIS team to check appropriate SEEMIS code to record the situation
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Contact the family by text and phone.</p> <p>If no response , contact the Gypsy / Traveller Liaison Officer (GTLO)</p> <p>gypsytravellerliaison@aberdeenshire.gov.uk</p> <p>07795 238423</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Further checks can be carried out via other Scottish GTLOs by the GTLO where this is felt to be required</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>If there are Child Protection concerns: follow child protection procedures, If there are Wellbeing concerns, complete a wellbeing assessment for the child or young person who is travelling. Also where their whereabouts are unknown and no communication has been received from the family explaining that they will be travelling for a period, Children Missing from Education procedures must be followed.</p>

7 Gypsy/Traveller Children

“Transient populations are a feature of modern society. Most of those entering from commonwealth countries and A8 countries do so for economic incentives and the higher standard of living these bring. Others coming to Scotland do so as refugees or asylum seekers. Whatever the reasons, there are multiple and cumulative stresses around the migration experience. These stresses arise from the difficulties in managing the transition to a new country.”

(2009, HMle, Count Us In- A Sense of Belonging Meeting the Needs of children and Young People Newly Arrived in Scotland, page 2)

Families may arrive in Scotland unaware of how to access education services in the local area and be unaware of the legal duties of parents in Scotland regarding the education of children particularly when this differs from their country of origin.

Enrolment / admissions procedures

As with any family, enrolment is an opportunity to receive formal and informal information about educational background, family dynamics and economic and social circumstances.

The information recorded on the ‘EAL Pupil Referral’ form facilitates the recording of family and previous school details and can be used to help trace a missing child.

Failure to attend or to complete transition

A number of children fail to attend their new primary or secondary school.

Where the school is making efforts to establish the reason for non-attendance by contacting the parents, the EAL Service can liaise with families through Interpreting Services on behalf of school. Enquiries can also include contacting the new school if

abroad to facilitate confirmation that the child is on the roll and attending.

Leaving or transferring to another school in Aberdeenshire or the UK

When the school is informed by a family that the family will be moving within the UK or abroad, the school should endeavor to obtain the address of the new home and school. Migrant families, for complex or unexpected personal circumstances, may not inform a school of a return to home country or a move to another location in the UK or abroad. Inform the EAL Service using the EAL 'Leaver/ Transfer' form to facilitate confirmation of destination. Where there are concerns about the welfare or safety of the child follow child protection procedures.

8 Recording Decisions and Actions

When the school has reached a decision to contact Social Work and /or the Police with a child protection concern this should be progressed without delay. Contact should be by phone rather than email.

Social Work or the Police will determine:

- That the child is considered to be at risk of immediate or significant harm.
- That the child is considered to be a "child in need".
- That no further action is identified as being required.

Regardless of the outcome of the discussion, details must be entered into the child's chronology and records by the CPC.

Recording where a child is considered to be at risk of imminent or significant harm:

- If the discussion above concludes that a child may be at risk of significant harm the Social Work Service will advise the CPC of next steps.
- Under these circumstances it is probable that Social Work or the Police will contact the establishment for additional information/ clarification. The Child Protection Coordinator will record that the conversation took place and notes of it using The Child Protection Record of Referral Form for establishments, RR1 found in the Protecting Children and Young People in Education Book 3 Practice Guidelines, and open an Education Child Protection Folder.
- When the outcome of the concern is fed back to the establishment, the Child Protection Coordinator should record this in the Education Child Protection Folder.

Recording where the child is considered to be a "child in need".

- If the outcome of the discussion with Social Work or the Police is that the child should be considered to be "in need", this should be recorded by the Child Protection Coordinator in the child's chronology together with agreed actions in response to the child's needs.
-

Additional recording where it is considered that no further action is required.

- If the outcome of the initial consultation with Social Work or the Police is that no further action is required this should be recorded in the child's chronology by the CPC.
 - The Child Protection Coordinator will ensure that form GC1 is filed in the restricted access area of the Pupil Progress Report (PPR) or Child Protection Education File if already open.
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9 Appendix 1

Children Missing from Education Request for a National Search Form

Request for a Search - Children Missing from Education

Please ensure you complete

- a case details sheet
- a family sheet
- one or more child sheet

Once completed form should be send to :
 CME Co-ordinator Katie Timney
cme@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Case details:

Case referred to the CME Co-ordinator by:

Name:

Designation:

School:

Telephone number:

Email:

Date:

Details of local investigations for all children in this case to be included in the search:

Local searches completed

**Date carried out
and by whom**

Outcome

Enquiries made with other children in the class

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Enquiries made with other school staff

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Enquiries made with other establishments where siblings are known to be or where siblings were enrolled

--	--

Home contact attempted

– by phone

--	--

– by visit

--	--

Contact made with relatives/emergency contact

--	--

Contact made with parent's last known employer

--	--

Contact made with other agencies:

- Social Work

--	--

- Housing Dept/Housing Agency

--	--

- Health

--	--

- Voluntary Agencies

--	--

- Police

--	--

Other

--	--

How many sets of child details are being sent with this referral?

--

Family details:

Family surname:

--

Last known address:

--

Other names the family has been known by:

--

Mother's first and maiden name (if known)

Father's name:

Is either parent in the military?

Yes/No

Is anyone in this family an asylum seeker?

Yes/No

Is anyone in this family a refugee?

Yes/No

Other known family whereabouts and telephone numbers:

Emergency contact and telephone number:

Any other background information

Please include in this section any other background information about why this case has been referred and/or any other relevant details which the CME co-ordinator should be made aware of e.g. medical issues, confidentiality etc.

Child Details - Please complete and return one set of details for each child

Forename(s):

Surname:

Date of Birth:

Gender:

Male/Female

SCN (Scotland only):

UPI (Outside Scotland):

Is this child to be included in the search?

Yes look for this child – please **complete section 2** and leave section 3 blank.

No for information only – please **go to section 3**.

Section 2 please complete the fields in this section if this child is to be included in the search.

Ethnic background (please use code list):

How is the child educated?

Please give as much detail as possible about schools the child has attended:

Name of School	Address of School	Stage of Pupil	Date of Enrolment	Date of last day of attendance

Has the pupil been taken off the register at their most recent school?

What was the reason for leaving? (use code list)

Is this child currently on the Child Protection Register?

Has this child been on the Child Protection Register in the last 24 months?

Does this child have a history of unauthorised absences?

Does this child have a history of exclusions?

Is this child looked after at home by the local authority in terms of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995?

Is this child looked after away from home by the local authority in terms of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995?

Does this child have an additional support need?

What is the nature of the additional support (please use the code list):

Section 3 please complete this section if you gave us these child details for information only

Do you know the whereabouts of this child?

10 Appendix 2

School advised by Parent/Carer that Child is moving School

Basic details form which can be given to parents to gather information on the move. Parents cannot be required to provide you with this information.

School advised by Parent/Carer that Child is moving School

Dear parent/carer,

I understand that your child will be moving school. I would be grateful if you could provide the information below as this helps us to pass on your child's school records.

Thank you for your help with this.

Parent /Carer's Name	
Parent/Carer's contact telephone number	
Parent/carer's contact email	
Name and Date of Birth of children moving school.	
1 st Child	
2 nd Child	
3 rd Child	
4 th Child	
New Address	

Town	
Post Code	
Country	
Name and address of school if known	
Date of move	

11 Appendix 3

ACTION CARD Urgent Action Required Child may have run from the school

For use by Nurseries, Primaries and Special Schools

Situation:	The location of a pupil is unknown and they may be missing from the school.
Objective	To Locate the child To alert Police, partners and parent/carers To inform QIO, Head of Service and Corporate Communications
Action by :	Head Teacher or senior staff members acting on behalf of the Head Teacher. HT will delegate certain tasks to staff members.

Date and Time school became aware of the situation:

Details of the Pupil:

Name

Age/DOB

Any ASN yes/no

On CP Register yes/no

Any CP Issues yes/no

Child's home/school
being kept secret yes/no

LAC yes/no

Any incidents yes/no

Where should child have been?

Address, parents/cares names and contact numbers

	What is the Situation	Action to be taken	Outcome of the Action
1	A child is thought to be missing from their expected location	HT speaks to the pupil's class and friends to check for any information they may have on the situation.	Child is unable to be found by a quick search of the school. HT advised.

		Carry out a quick search of the school/location.	Pupils may have provided information on the location or intent of the pupil thought to be missing
2	Pupil is thought to have left the site or has not been found in a quick search of school and any known hiding spots used by children in the school grounds	HT contacts Police Scotland, dial 999, and advises of the situation and the level of concern. Give pupil details and advise of any history of concern. Advise you will contact parent/carers and relevant partners	Complete check of school and school grounds. Follow Police advice Make contact with the parents/carers
		HT delegates staff member to follow the route the pupil may have taken home and to any known locations the pupil may have gone to.	Staff member follows the route the pupil may have taken home. Staff member alerts HT if pupil seen and approaches the pupil where it is felt safe to do so ie the approach will not encourage the pupil to run off or behave in a way likely to cause harm. HT alerts Police
3	HT is contacting the parents/carers	HT briefs the parents/carers on the situation and actions underway	Parent may advise of possible locations for the child and any issues which have arisen at home. Provide parent with a contact number for HT HT passes relevant information on to the Police.
4	Decide if there is a need for Partners to be advised of the child being missing	HT advises Social Work of the situation if the child is LAC or on the CP Register, open to SW, or a child whose location is being kept secret	Partners updated and may be aware of possible locations. HT advises Police of any relevant information obtained.
5	Police have been advised, school has been searched, Parents/carers have been	Brief QIO, Head of Service and Corp Comms on the situation.	Senior Team and Corp Comms briefed

	advised, and relevant Partners have been advised.		
6	Child has been found : in school or other location	Advise parents, Police and partners of the situation. Advise QIO, head of Service and Corp Comms	Follow any Police advice given Follow any advice given by partners. Police and SW may want to speak to the child.
7	Child has not been found and it is nearing the end of the school day.	Contact Police and agree how the ongoing search will continue. Establish who will be the Education contact for the Police and the parents/carers. Advise the Police that you will be contacting the parents/carers and be providing an out of hours contact number for the school	Education contact established and contact numbers known.
	Make contact with the parents , having agreed this with the Police	Update the parents/ carers. Provide ongoing contact numbers for them to use as need be, advise who will be remaining in contact with them	Parents and Carers know who will be Education contact and have contact details.
	QIO , Corporate Communications and Head of Service to be updated	Take advice from QIO and Head of Service on the need to activate the school's emergency plan.	Agree next steps in line with advice and instruction from the Police
