

# MISSING CHILDREN AND ADULTS

## A CROSS GOVERNMENT STRATEGY



Home Office





# Contents

- Foreword ..... 4
- 1. Introduction..... 5
- 2. Background..... 7
- 3. Children..... 9
- 4. Strategic Objectives Framework..... 13
- 5. Roles and responsibilities ..... 23
- 6. Making an Impact..... 27

# Ministerial Foreword



Safeguarding vulnerable members of our society is a key priority for this Government.

There are an estimated 360,000 reports of people going missing in the UK each year amounting to approximately 200,000 missing people. Children and young people make up approximately two thirds of the missing reports and although the vast majority of people who go missing return, or are found quickly, many vulnerable children and adults suffer harm and exploitation whilst missing and some never return.

Identifying and ensuring the safest return possible for these vulnerable children and adults is a key part of the police service's child protection and wider safeguarding role. However, tackling this issue requires a multi-agency response and co-ordination across a range of policy areas and operational partners including the police, local authorities and the health sector.

Following the recent All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) inquiry into the support for families of missing people in July 2011, I accepted the overarching recommendation that there should be a cross-government outcomes policy framework for missing persons. I also accepted the principles behind the Inquiry recommendations, including that we can and should do better in the support we provide to families and announced that I would lead development of a cross cutting strategy on missing children and adults.

Evidence from the APPG inquiry and consultation with stakeholders and key delivery partners showed

that, although we have the right policies and responsibilities in place to tackle this issue, agencies are not always clear about these roles and responsibilities, nor do they always recognise the risks of harm that vulnerable children and adults face when missing.

With this in mind, this strategy sets out a small number of strategic objectives which we believe provide the right foundations for any effective local strategy and which provide a framework for local areas to put in place their own arrangements which seek to ensure we do all we can to prevent people going missing in the first place but that we also ensure we reduce the harm to vulnerable children and adults when they do go missing, focusing on those most at risk, and ensuring that families are supported.

I am grateful to colleagues in other Government Departments, the Welsh Government and to the range of national and local organisations that have helped contribute to the development of this strategy which I firmly believe will help support the step change in delivery needed at a local level to ensure we provide missing children, adults and their families with help, protection and support they need.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Brokenshire', written in a cursive style.

**James Brokenshire**  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Crime and Security

# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Every year an estimated 200,000 people go missing in the UK. Whilst in some cases, missing adults may make a life choice to leave and ‘start their lives over again’ the majority of missing people, children and adults, are vulnerable. Many go missing as a result of problems they want to leave behind (for example domestic abuse, job loss or problems with a care placement) or because they have been encouraged to leave (for example as a result of grooming). Many vulnerable children and adults go missing as a result of factors over which they have no control, for example, in the case of an older person suffering from dementia (who may forget where they live) or, in some of the worst cases, a child who may be abducted.
- 1.2 The UK Government’s far reaching reforms on education, employment, early intervention and family support aim to address some of the entrenched educational and social problems that can trigger children, young people or adults to run away or go missing. But as well as the children and adults who go missing, hundreds of thousands of relatives and families are affected and, in the worst cases, families can be left for years or more wondering what has happened to loved ones who, in some cases, may never return.
- 1.3 This is an important issue and we all have a role to play in tackling it. With this in mind, this strategy, which focuses primarily on vulnerable people who go missing within England and Wales, provides a framework in which we can all work to deliver collectively the best protection possible for missing children, adults and their families. It includes a small number of strategic objectives which we believe provide the right foundations for any effective local strategy. By providing a framework for local areas to put in place their own arrangements it seeks to ensure we do all we can to prevent people going missing in the first place, that we also reduce the harm to vulnerable children and adults when they do go missing, that we focus on those most at risk, and ensure that families are supported.
- 1.4 To deliver these changes this strategy proposes the following objectives to which all of us, whether operating at a local or national level, in the statutory or voluntary sector, should work collectively to deliver:
  - **Prevention – reducing the number of people who go missing** – through prevention strategies, education work and early intervention in cases where children, young people and adults repeatedly go missing.
  - **Protection – reducing the risk of harm to those who go missing** – by ensuring local agencies provide a tailored, risk based response to cases of missing children, young people and adults and that they work together to find the person and to close cases as quickly as possible at a local and national level.
  - **Provision – providing missing people and their families with support and guidance** – by referring promptly and ensuring that missing people and their families understand how and where to access help and support.
- 1.5 When someone goes missing it is, by and large, a matter for the local agencies who will want to work together to find them as quickly as possible. We know that in areas where partnership working has been developed and arrangements proactively put in place this has made a real difference in helping missing people and their families.
- 1.6 Families and communities need to be confident that when vulnerable adults and children go missing everything will be done to ensure they do not go missing again; that those responsible for finding them will also work to reduce the likelihood that they will come to harm whilst away and that all agencies will work together at a local and national level to resolve missing cases as quickly as possible, whilst providing the families of missing people with the support they need.

- 1.7 Government also believes we can do more to reduce the dangers facing vulnerable adults and children whilst they are missing. For example, statutory guidance on children who runaway or go missing from home or care in England will shortly be revised and the recently published national action plan to tackle child sexual exploitation in England includes a range of measures to help ensure agencies are equipped to identify this issue and protect vulnerable children from falling victim to this terrible crime. We also believe that more can be done to support the families of missing people by signposting them to the support provided by a range of voluntary organisations and projects, be they at a local or national level.
- 1.8 There are many examples of effective practice in this field where proactive multi-agency activity has delivered better protection and support for missing people and their families. Government hopes that local areas will consider the examples included within the strategy and that these will encourage and support the development of further additional effective local multi-agency arrangements which will be able to tackle this issue within local communities.

## 2. Background

### SCALE OF THE ISSUE

- 2.1 The police receive an estimated 360,000 reports of missing people every year across the UK. Many of these are repeat incidents involving the same individuals going missing a number of times. Nevertheless, these figures amount to approximately 200,000 people going missing every year. Children and young people are more likely to go missing than adults with approximately two thirds of reports relating to children in 2009/10<sup>1</sup>.
- 2.2 Of course in the majority of cases where someone goes missing, the impact goes much wider than just the missing person themselves. Families are left behind, often in limbo not knowing the whereabouts or welfare of their loved ones. This scale means that agencies such as the charity 'Missing People' are subject to a high volume of demand; indeed 'Missing People's' helpline receives around 114,000 calls each year<sup>2</sup>.
- 2.3 At a conservative estimate, the average missing persons enquiry costs an estimated £1000, with the police service spending just under £500m to support such cases in the five years from 2003-2008.<sup>3</sup>

### WHO GOES MISSING?

- 2.4 Research has shown that children are more likely than adults to go missing, placing them in risky situations and increasing their vulnerability to a whole range of issues, including homelessness, becoming a victim or perpetrator of crime and, as we are increasingly aware, placing many of these vulnerable young people at greater risk of child sexual exploitation.
- 2.5 Although children and young people account for the majority of missing cases, a large number of vulnerable adults go missing each year. Approximately 12,000 individuals are reported

missing from NHS care every year and a very high proportion of these will have a mental health problem or learning disability, will misuse substances or have dementia. It is estimated that four out of every five adults who go missing are experiencing a mental health problem at the time they disappear and separate research has previously found that the primary reason for adults going missing was due to relationship breakdown within their family, followed by drifting away (losing touch with their families), mental health issues, or escaping a negative situation.<sup>4</sup>

### WHAT HAPPENS TO THEM?

- 2.6 The vast majority of people who go missing are found quickly or return voluntarily. Figures from police forces indicate that between 55% to 80% of missing people return within 24 hours. In cases of missing children approximately 75% of incidents are cancelled within 48 hours, rising to 90% within five days. Only around 1% of missing people remain missing after one year, approximately 2,000 people<sup>5</sup>.
- 2.7 However, whilst many missing children and adults return, many missing people also suffer harm and exploitation whilst away. Derbyshire Police's Operation Retriever is just one example of a case where children who were going missing for small periods of time before returning were in fact victims of child sexual exploitation who were suffering serious and organised child abuse. In addition to those who return seemingly well, some missing people never return. Approximately 20 people per week are found dead after being reported missing<sup>6</sup> with adults more likely than young people to be found dead after going missing<sup>7</sup>.

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4 Research summary "Lost from View: Missing Persons in the UK" (Biehal, Mitchell and Wade, 2003)

5 Every Five Minutes (Parents and Abducted Children Together (PACT), 2005)

6 Missing Persons Data and Analysis Report 2009-10 (NPIA Missing Persons Bureau)

7 Evidence to the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Runaway and Missing Children and Adults – June 2011 (Martin-Houghton-Brown, Missing People)

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1 Missing Persons Data and Analysis Report 2009-10 (NPIA Missing Persons Bureau)

2 Evidence to the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Runaway and Missing Adults, 13th June 2011 ( Martin Houghton-Brown, Missing People)

3 Missing Persons Taskforce briefing paper: the costs associated with missing persons enquiries (Missing Persons Bureau 2010)

## WHAT HAPPENS TO THE PEOPLE THEY LEAVE BEHIND?

- 2.8 The effect of a loved one going missing cannot be underestimated. The real damage done to emotional and physical health caused by the worry of not knowing where a missing relative is and whether they are safe and well is huge. The charity 'Missing People' alone supports around 1000 families per year through their services<sup>8</sup> but many more families do not access any support services and bear the emotional impact and worry of their missing child or family loved one alone.
- 2.9 In addition to these emotional support issues, families can find themselves carrying the financial burden of undertaking search activities, or suffer the impact of losing the missing person's income. They can be left with complex legal and ownership issues to deal with whilst simultaneously suffering the emotional impact of the disappearance. This can lead to significant support needs. Family members of missing people have lost jobs, been forced to leave jobs, and had difficulty finding work following disappearances. And emotional impacts can result in physical symptoms such as sleeplessness, stress and deteriorating health, with a contingent impact on the National Health Service<sup>9</sup>.
- 2.10 The recent All-Party Parliamentary Group for Runaway and Missing Children and Adults' 2011 Inquiry highlighted some of the difficulties families face in accessing support and highlighted the need for families to be signposted to specialist support.

## CASE STUDY – LUKE\*

Luke was a hard-working, family man when he suddenly lost his job during a round of layoffs. Consumed by feelings of failure and uselessness, the 34-year-old left his home in Ipswich, leaving his wife and young daughter behind. It was early on a February morning when Luke turned to Missing People's Message Home helpline for support. He said: "I feel alone and isolated, and unable to cope."

Missing People provides the 24-hour, Freephone Message Home for adults who are in crisis, unsure of what to do next or who would like to pass a message to someone. They explained to Luke that the charity respects the right of an adult to go missing, and to stay missing, if that is what they want to do. Not yet ready to go home, Luke asked the charity to pass a message to his wife, letting her know that he was safe and well. Luke's wife responded: "We both love and miss you." Luke told the charity: "I was desperate and thought no one cared. The only answer was to disappear. Hearing that they love and miss me makes me feel like everything might turn out OK."

Missing People is constantly working towards supporting those who are missing and their families left living in limbo. Without Message Home, Luke might never have found the courage to get back in touch with his family.

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\*Not his real name

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<sup>8</sup> Evidence to All-Party Parliamentary Group for Runaway and Missing Adults – June 2011 (Jo Youle, Missing People)

<sup>9</sup> Living in Limbo (Missing People, 2008)



## 3. Children

- 3.1 Missing children account for approximately two thirds of missing cases and the reasons children go missing and the risks they face are different from adults. Whilst this strategy includes a set of objectives which we believe apply equally to missing adults and children this section provides context to the particular issues surrounding missing children of which agencies will want to be aware. This should inform the development of local approaches and strategies that recognise and tackle the differences in responding to the challenges of children who go missing.
- 3.2 The full extent of this issue is supported by studies which found 64% of missing reports related to children and young people (under 18) with the 15 to 17 year-olds age group making up approximately one third of all reports. In 2009/10, the police recorded over 35,000 incidents of missing people involving 15 to 17 year olds, and over 30,000 further incidents involving those 14 or under.<sup>10</sup>
- 3.3 Missing children and young people are at real risk of harm when missing with one study concluding 25% suffered some form of abuse whilst missing, 13% of young runaways physically hurt, and 8% of young runaways sexually assaulted.<sup>11</sup> Just over half of child sexual exploitation cases involve a young person who has at some time been reported missing and research carried out in Wales has found that in 90% of cases where children were at risk of sexual exploitation, there was a history of them going missing<sup>12</sup>. Repeatedly going missing from home is increasingly recognised as a key indicator to agencies that a child may be a victim of child sexual exploitation<sup>13</sup>. Young people who run away can also get caught up in criminality and homelessness and may suffer mental health problems including depression.<sup>14</sup> Children and young people may be at risk of developing mental health issues as a result of going missing.
- 3.4 The vast majority of missing children cases are repeats with the same child going missing – ‘running’ away from or towards something. These children face serious risks and recent cases in Derby and elsewhere have highlighted the links between cases where children were going missing time and again and were in fact being subjected to very serious and severe child abuse and sexual exploitation.
- 3.5 In response to the horrific cases of organised child sexual exploitation highlighted earlier this year and the Barnardo’s ‘Puppet on a String’ report the UK Government has developed an action plan to tackle child sexual exploitation in England. The plan, which recognises the severity of this issue, highlights the links with missing and the need for all agencies to work together effectively and pro-actively to tackle this issue locally. Separate guidance has been published by the Welsh Government which is designed to help practitioners identify children at risk and equip them to provide these vulnerable children and take action against perpetrators.

### OPERATION RETRIEVER

Operation Retriever was a major proactive covert police investigation into the organised sexual exploitation of girls in the Derby area. The investigation started in January 2009 and became overt in April 2009. When brought to trial this involved 13 defendants and 27 victims. The police worked closely with Safe & Sound Derby, a charity that works with children and young people which provided many of the referrals in this case. The multi-agency review of the cases of the 27 victims in Operation Retriever revealed that a total of 18 young people had at some point been reported missing to the police.

10 Missing Persons Data and Analysis Report 2009-10 (NPIA Missing Persons Bureau)

11 Every Five Minutes (Parents and Abducted Children Together (PACT), 2005)

12 Child Sexual Exploitation in Wales: 3 years on (Barnardo’s Cymru 2008)

13 Out of Mind, Out of Sight (CEOP, 2011)

14 Scoping Report on Missing and Abducted Children (CEOP, 2011)

- 3.6 But children go missing for a variety of reasons. Research from the Children’s Society makes clear that problems at school have also been recognised as a factor in causing young people to run away from home<sup>15</sup>. Whilst children may run away from something, more worryingly, they may be running towards something if they have been groomed for exploitation, whether online or through ‘on street grooming’. Some children go missing for longer periods and their whereabouts may remain unknown. Others may go missing for shorter periods of time, but go missing repeatedly.
- 3.7 We know trafficked children are particularly vulnerable to going missing from care and the Government’s recently published UK Human Trafficking strategy includes specific actions to help tackle this issue by working with the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre to ensure that the national capability supports this in the best way possible, in particular, ensuring that we build on the learning and experiences of local partners such as Hillingdon, Harrow, and Hertfordshire local authorities to ensure that the safety of trafficked children is the first priority while they remain in local authority care and that the risks of them going missing or being re-trafficked are minimised. The Welsh Government has published good practice guidance for professionals and volunteers from all agencies, working to safeguard children who may have been trafficked and an all- Wales Protocol on Child Trafficking recognises the importance of agencies working together to help protect child victims and prosecute the traffickers.
- 3.8 In addition to specific issues surrounding trafficked children who go missing from care there are also particular issues and needs surrounding children who go missing as a result of abduction. In the majority of these cases children are abducted by a family member but in rare cases, children are abducted by strangers too. CEOP’s recent scoping study on missing and

## LONDON BOROUGH OF HILLINGDON

Between 2007 and 2009, 79 young people in Hillingdon went missing from care shortly after arriving in the country. Many of these children were potential trafficking victims who had been brought into the country and Hillingdon established an operation model in partnership with law enforcement agencies with the aim of addressing this issue, Hillingdon’s response, which is based around multi-agency working and pro-active identification of risk includes a multi-agency operational group made up of frontline staff meeting every six weeks to discuss and assess the situation of every child reported missing in Hillingdon. This includes any children identified as at risk of trafficking on arrival at the airport. This group uses and applies the London Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) trafficking toolkit techniques to identify trafficking victims and create child safeguarding plans which mitigate the risks of a child going missing. This approach has significantly reduced the number of potentially trafficked children going missing in this local authority area.

abducted children concluded that although overall numbers of child abduction in England seem to be falling, the overall numbers of parental abductions appear to be increasing.<sup>16</sup>

- 3.9 Whilst stranger abductions will always be high risk events the same study also concluded that in cases where a child is caught up in custodial disagreement between parents which leads to abduction of the child by a parent, these children are at risk of harm where the abducting parent may present a danger to the child or where the lack of ensuing contact and sudden change of locality may detrimentally affect the long term well being of the child.<sup>17</sup> It is clear therefore that behind all these cases are individual children that require a tailored and risk informed response from agencies.

15 Still Running II - Rees and Lee (The Children’s Society, 2005)

16 Scoping Report on Missing and Abducted Children (CEOP 2011)

17 Scoping Report on Missing and Abducted Children (CEOP 2011)

3.10 However, the most frequent reason given by young people who have gone missing is ‘problems at home’. Occasional runaways are seven times more likely to say they had been ‘hit a lot’ by their parents, and repeat runaways 17 times more likely. Children in care are particularly at risk of going missing<sup>18</sup> and children in care are three times more likely to run away. 25% of missing children and young people reported mental health problems, with 5% citing mental health problems as the reason for running away<sup>19</sup>. And young people with drugs and alcohol problems are at least four times as likely to run away as those without<sup>20</sup>.

3.11 Getting underneath these issues can be key to helping children who run away or go missing. However, children and young people may respond differently to authority figures and statutory agencies and may also take time to disclose what is happening to them or in their lives. It is therefore key that full use is made of return interviews and that agencies working where possible with the voluntary sector, come together to understand the issues surrounding the young person and put in place a strategy of action.

3.12 The importance of having a voluntary sector project working in the local area has been highlighted by a range of partners as a key factor in safeguarding children. These projects are able to provide independent and confidential advice and support for children and their families. The flexible and accessible approach offered by these services is valued by statutory agencies and children due to the ability to provide immediate support. Children and young people are often reluctant to share information with the police or social workers due to fear of statutory agencies. Voluntary sector workers are able to build trusted relationships with children to enable them to share information about where they have gone

missing, what happened while they were away and what support they need. Projects can also provide a range of other services, including family mediation and parenting support. They can have a key role in sharing information with other agencies to safeguard and engage children to develop a support package to meet their needs.

3.13 The voluntary sector is able to deliver prevention and awareness raising in the local community on issues relating to running away and child sexual exploitation, through schools, youth settings and children’s homes. The voluntary sector has been instrumental in advocating on the behalf of children within multi-agency meetings, whilst ensuring that statutory agencies are fulfilling their responsibilities as set out in relevant guidance.

## SAFE AND SOUND DERBY

Safe and Sound Derby provides specialist support to children and young people up to the age of 18 who have been identified as being, or at risk of being, sexually exploited. Safe and Sound works with young people on a one-to-one and small group basis to enable them to understand grooming and sexual exploitation, and empowers them to move away from abusive relationships. Safe and Sound leads work to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation and its warning signs among children and young people in schools, and other educational settings, as well as in the wider community, i.e. youth clubs, under 18s club nights. It also delivers training programmes to enable professionals working with children, young people and families to recognise the warning signs of child sexual exploitation to ensure that children at risk receive timely and appropriate support. It also offers support to the parents and carers of young victims, working with them to build resilience and coping strategies to enable them to safeguard effectively and support their children.

18 Scoping Report on Missing and Abducted Children (CEOP 2011)

19 Every Five Minutes (Parents and Abducted Children Together (PACT), 2005)

20 Scoping Report on Missing and Abducted Children (CEOP 2011)

- 3.14 At a local level current legislation places responsibilities on a range of local partners, most notably, local authorities, the police and health partners in relation to the care and protection of young people under the age of 18. Local authority children's services in England also have a number of specific duties to organise and plan services and to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under section 18 of the Children Act 2004. In Wales the specific duties are set out in the 'Statutory Guidance on the Role and Accountabilities of the Director of Social Services', which was published in 2009 and issued under Section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970. Under section 11 and section 28 of the Children Act 2004 local partners in England and Wales respectively have a duty to ensure that their functions are discharged with regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and Local Safeguarding Children Boards have a key role to play in addressing missing children issues. In Wales the All Wales Child Protection Procedures are also available to advise and support frontline practitioners. Legislation also places duties on local authorities to provide emergency refuge accommodation to children and young people within their area.
- 3.15 At a national level, the UK Government has already taken steps to strengthen the arrangements to support missing children, transferring responsibility for national missing children services from the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) Missing Persons Bureau to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre from 1st July 2011. This development has put in place, for the first time within the UK, a dedicated capability focused on missing children issues.
- 3.16 CEOP have a strong and successful record of protecting children. In the five years since it was established a cumulative total of 1,038 children have been safeguarded or protected, while 1,644 child sex offenders have been arrested – all achieved as a direct result of CEOP's intelligence reports and/or deployment of CEOP specialist resources. In addition, a cumulative total of 394 offender networks have been dismantled.
- 3.17 By placing this new missing children capability within CEOP, this has ensured that CEOP can bring their considerable child protection expertise to bear on this important issue and that our national response to this issue benefits from their exemplary partnership working model. CEOP's capability will be further enhanced by its inclusion within the new National Crime Agency (NCA) from 2013.
- 3.18 Although focused primarily on supporting local forces in cases where children go missing within the UK, CEOP's new function has strengthened the UK's response in this area by ensuring a clear lead agency for complex missing children cases. Where a case has an international dimension, capability now exists within CEOP to respond to and co-ordinate the UK law enforcement response to finding a child in any future cases where children may have gone missing or been abducted, be that in the UK, or abroad.
- 3.19 In addition, the Ministry of Justice has the policy lead on international parental child abduction for the UK. The International Child Abduction and Contact Unit is the Central Authority which has dealt since 1986 with casework where the child has been abducted to or from England and Wales and a country which is party to the 1980 Hague Child Abduction Convention<sup>21</sup>. There are separate Central Authorities for Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- 3.20 The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) leads on casework in relation to countries which are not party to the 1980 Hague Child Abduction Convention. They established a dedicated Child Abduction Section in 2003 to assist British nationals affected by actual or potential international parental child abduction.

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21 The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, 1980, provides rules for parental child abduction across frontiers. Its primary aims are to discourage the abduction of children and provide a straightforward procedure to ensure the prompt return of the child to their country of habitual residence.

# 4. Strategic Objectives Framework

## OBJECTIVE 1 – PREVENTION: REDUCE THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO GO MISSING

**Our collective ambition is to protect and prevent vulnerable children and adults from going missing. To achieve this we all need to play our part in contributing to reducing the number of people who go missing. Effective prevention strategies, education work and early intervention by local agencies in repeat cases will all help to reduce the vulnerability and likelihood of vulnerable children and adults going missing and reduce the number of repeat cases.**

### LOCAL ACTION

- 4.1 In order to effectively prevent and reduce the number of people going missing in any area, local agencies need to understand the picture and context of ‘missing’ and whether there are any particular locations or venues in their area which are particularly high risk and where people are regularly going missing. Police forces receive reports on people who go missing and are therefore the primary custodians of this valuable information. To ensure delivery of these objectives locally **individual police forces have a key role to play in providing a picture of what ‘missing’ looks like in their area.**
- 4.2 Although the police hold information on the number and locations where people go missing from, they cannot take effective action to tackle the issue alone. It is therefore key that these local pictures should be considered collectively by partners and existing forums including **Local Safeguarding Children Boards**, and **Safeguarding Adults Boards**, **provide opportunities for partners to agree preventative strategies and action to mitigate risks** of people going missing from high risk locations (e.g. children’s homes, mental health services and older people’s care homes).

### NEWCASTLE M-SET

In 2007 in Newcastle, the M-SET (Missing/ Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking Group) was established as a sub group of the Newcastle Safeguarding Children Board. The group produces annual Missing Persons data reports collating information on monthly figures for the total number of children reported missing to the police in Newcastle and compares this to other areas within the Northumbria Police Force Area. The report analyses repeat missing incidents, demographic data and whether they are looked after. This information is used to provide an informed picture about running away and patterns of running away in the Newcastle area. M-SET devises, implements and monitors its strategic plan to improve outcomes for children and young people at risk due to going missing, sexual exploitation and trafficking and ensures effective links with other service plans.

- 4.3 Local partnerships should be developed which help move away from process and agency boundaries and focus on identification of high risk individuals and prevent vulnerable people going missing. Through these partnership arrangements **there should be clear prioritisation and engagement by all agencies in preventing children and vulnerable adults going missing and in taking action to reduce instances where the same children and adults go repeatedly missing in an area.**

## BARNARDO'S SEXUALLY EXPLOITED CHILDREN'S OUTREACH SERVICE (SECOS)

The Barnardo's SECOS project based in Middlesbrough offers a range of social care, health and education services, as well as practical help with health, housing, benefit agencies and education to children who have run away or been exploited. The project focuses on addressing the range of issues around the young person's needs. These will revolve around abuse issues, homelessness, drug and alcohol misuse, sexual health, emotional and general well being and missing from home. The SECOS project works closely with Cleveland Police to assess with families the issues and ways of resolving cases of children missing from home. The project has local protocols in place with Middlesbrough LSCB, the local authority Children, Families and Learning Services, Middlesbrough Primary Care Trust and Cleveland Police and the collaborative work ensures that identified sexually exploited young people are seen as victims of crime and not perpetrators of it. In 2009 SECOS worked with 48 children who were sexually exploited between the ages of 14 and 18, of whom 17 (35%) were identified as missing from home and were helped with addressing the reasons for running away.

**trafficking reviews** this will help ensure we have a better understanding of the nature and scale of the challenges we face.

- 4.5 In addition to this, **CEOP will support delivery of prevention messages into schools and directly to children and young people on risks around missing** through its Thinkuknow educational products and materials provided to teachers for use in classrooms with children and young people. CEOP have developed a wide range of resources which include films, lesson plans and online games that focus on children and young people at different key stages. By utilising the Thinkuknow network CEOP will be able to **bring important preventative and educational messages about the risks and issues relating to children and young people going missing** to their network of over 60,000 users that cascade these messages directly into classrooms. Although school membership of the scheme is voluntary, CEOP's Thinkuknow package has been seen by children 9 million times since 2006. Products such as **CEOP's new 'Choices' animated film will provide children with information on the risks of running away and going missing and provide signposts to organisations and platforms where they can access support.** These educational products and messages have an important role to play in helping to reduce and prevent children and young people from running away.
- 4.6 Similarly on training, CEOP will focus **training and best practice advice for police on identifying risks** that may lead to a child going missing and suffering harm, and to help manage the **consequences of a child or young person going missing.**
- 4.7 At a national level the Department for Education will continue to collect information on the number of looked after children in England absent for more than 24 hours from their agreed care placement. It will also continue to **require**

## NATIONAL SUPPORT

- 4.4 To support this local activity, the UK Government, together with the national Missing Persons Bureau and CEOP will ensure **periodic national assessments of the nature, scale and risks associated with missing people** to help inform policy making, local assessments and to aid in the identification of effective preventative work and risk assessments of missing people. CEOP's recent assessment of child sexual exploitation greatly improved existing levels of understanding of the extent and scale of the problem and with future work also planned with partners including the **forthcoming scoping report on child abduction and periodic child**

**local authorities to collect information about missing from care incidents, shared with police** to ensure action is taken to find the child and minimise the likelihood of a repeat.

4.8 To support this, the Department for Education has already **revised the National Minimum Standards for Children’s Homes and Foster Services** in England to require all Homes and Fostering Services to have explicit procedures for missing or absent looked after children which minimise the likelihood of their going missing. These standards also require children’s homes to be familiar with local police missing persons procedures and whenever a child is missing, homes should work closely with the police and proactively seek to locate the child.

4.9 Wider work is also underway that will help deliver these objectives including the recently published national **Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan** for England, which acknowledges the strong links between missing children and child sexual exploitation. The action plan includes measures to address the issue of raising awareness and understanding; effective prevention and detection; the challenge of securing prosecutions; and the need to improve support for victims. **The action plan acknowledges the strong links that exist between children being sexually exploited and children going missing or running away. Any actions which can be taken to reduce the numbers of children going missing are likely to help prevent sexual exploitation taking place.**

4.10 Early in 2011 the Welsh Government published Guidance on **Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation** which is designed to help practitioners identify children at risk, take steps to protect them and allow action to be taken against perpetrators. The publication was supported through regional training events, delivered by Barnardo’s Cymru.

### **BARNARDOS’ CYMRU SEXUAL EXPLOITATION RISK ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK (SERAF)**

The Barnardo’s Cymru SERAF Service works across Wales with children and young people aged 10 to 18 who are at risk of or abused through sexual exploitation. SERAF works using a sexual exploitation risk assessment model, which enables identification of key areas of risk or vulnerabilities in young people’s lives. SERAF work intensively with young people to reduce these risks (such as reducing episodes of going missing and reduced contact with dangerous adults) whilst also increasing ‘protective factors’; such as improved relationships with parents or carers, improved attendance at school, increased contact with agencies such as health (including sexual and mental health) and other mainstream services. The ultimate aim of the service is that children and young people are free from abuse, underlying issues are addressed and that young people are empowered to make positive changes in their lives.

4.11 With regards to health issues and adults in vulnerable situations, work is underway to deliver the implementation plan for the **National Dementia Strategy (2009)** in England. The Strategy devolves power to clinicians and patients so that services are designed and delivered to meet the needs and wants of individuals and their local communities. The **Dementia Commissioning Pack** was launched in England in July 2011. Together these two products will help support local agencies to give patients the best outcomes they need including diagnosis, treatment and care. They also make clear Government’s commitment to accelerate the pace of improvement through a greater focus on local delivery and accountability, empowering citizens to hold local organisations to account. The Welsh Government is committed to continuing to improve care and support for people with dementia and their families and carers by

implementing the **National Dementia Vision for Wales (2011)**.

4.12 The UK Government has also made clear in its **strategy for mental health in England ‘No health without mental health’** that it is committed to working with partners to ensure that mental health is placed on a par with physical health, and as part of that to improve safeguarding. In Wales, mental health is one of the cornerstones of the health services provided for the people of Wales. It is particularly important that the needs of those with the most severe and enduring mental illnesses are prioritised. **The Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010 is introducing some significant changes** around advocacy, care coordination and planning, entitlement to assessment and local primary care mental health support services. **The Welsh Government is developing a new Mental Health Strategy for Wales** with the aim to develop a unified approach to mental health for people of all ages and thereby reduce the complications of transition as people age and require intervention from different parts of the system. A draft strategy is aimed to be produced for consultation by spring 2012.

## **OBJECTIVE 2 – PROTECTION: REDUCE THE RISK OF HARM CAUSED TO THOSE WHO GO MISSING**

**Despite our best efforts vulnerable people will still go missing and when they do they need to be protected. Reducing the harm caused to those who do go missing is therefore our next priority, ensuring that local agencies understand the vulnerabilities and risks missing people face; that they understand each others’ roles and responsibilities; and that they work together to find people and resolve cases as quickly as possible.**

### **LOCAL ACTION**

- 4.13 In order to resolve missing cases as quickly and effectively as possible **local agencies need a clear understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities** and need to work together locally to ensure that the best arrangements are in place to deliver this.
- 4.14 To reduce the risks of harm that missing people are exposed to **local level partners will want to put in place partnership arrangements and pro-active plans to respond when a child or vulnerable adult goes missing.** When a child goes missing from a care placement it is critical that the local authority works with the police and provides all the necessary information to ensure the child is located swiftly. Equally, where older people with dementia or other adults in vulnerable situations are being looked after in a care home, staff there should work with all partners to seek to find them as quickly as possible.
- 4.15 A missing adult who is unwell and who has no support can rapidly come to harm through neglect and self harm. It is known that over a quarter of suicides recorded for mental health residential units actually take place away from the ward, often after the patient has been reported missing. Similarly, a missing child will face a whole range of risks



## WEST MERCIA POLICE

West Mercia Police experienced high numbers of reports involving increased numbers of children going missing from local authority care within their force area. To tackle missing reports overall, concerted efforts by the police, including close working with Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission as well as challenging children's homes on their quality of care and response to persistent absconding, resulted in significant improvements, with overall missing reports (adults and children) falling from 7,471 in the 12 month period 1 November 2009 to 31 October 2010 to 6,824 in the following 12 month period. This reduction in reports of 647 over that period was estimated by West Mercia as equating to operational efficiency savings of approximately £1.2million (equivalent to 31 constable posts)

In addition to their preventative work the force's proactive partnership work with Missing People enabled the development of an automated texting service Textsafe® from the charity direct to missing children and adults and a similar partnership with the Samaritans means the police, with the consent of next of kin, can share a missing person's mobile phone number with the charity where there is a high risk of the individual committing suicide.

and vulnerabilities whilst they are missing. **The sooner these vulnerable people are identified and supported the better the chances of safeguarding their wellbeing. Frontline staff, be they police officers, children's services or health workers need to understand and recognise going missing as an indicator of vulnerability and know how to respond.**

- 4.16 Police are most often the first agency to take the report that a child or adult has gone missing and **forces should ensure reports of missing people are robustly risk assessed** and all staff involved with children and vulnerable adults should be clear where to refer to ensuring that agencies can

respond to the right individuals in the right way and in proportion to the risk. To aid this process **the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) is currently piloting an approach to managing missing persons reports which allows the police to respond in a more flexible way, with an additional focus on prevention.** Government, in conjunction with ACPO will work to ensure the pilots are robustly evaluated and any effective practice rolled out to wider forces.

- 4.17 Effective information sharing is a critical success factor in correctly identifying vulnerability and in ensuring that when children or vulnerable adults go missing, they are found quickly. **Local areas will want to ensure effective arrangements are in place to share information between agencies and may wish to consider the benefits of co-located multi-agency teams.** Many areas that have put in place such arrangements have reported what they believe to be enhanced outcomes for vulnerable groups, including better targeting of resources on those most at risk.

## DEVON MULTI AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB (MASH)

The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) facilitates information sharing between key partners to inform an appropriate safeguarding response to a vulnerable person. Partners work together at a co-located site, enabling a decision to quickly be made as to which service should intervene to safeguard the referred individual. Partners (including police, children and young people's services, probation, health, education, adult services, mental health services, and fire and ambulance services) pool their data and expertise on safeguarding, identifying known risks and assessing preventative responses. Since setting up the model Devon and Cornwall Police have been able to reduce referrals to Devon Children and Young People's Services by 25%, and ensured that the correct children are being targeted by social workers. Meanwhile early interventions have increased by 40%.

4.18 In relation specifically to children, police and children's services officers have a key role in identifying and addressing the **risks and links between children who repeatedly go missing and child sexual exploitation. Return interviews are a valuable and important opportunity to engage with the young person** and areas that have engaged voluntary sector partners in this process report a greater likelihood of disclosure from children, than where engagement is primarily or solely with the police and statutory partners.

### SUSSEX POLICE MODEL & 'CATCH 22'

Sussex Police have in place three area based missing persons co-ordinators who undertake proactive analysis of all missing and absent reports engaging partners where necessary. The role of the missing persons co-ordinators involves detailed and pro-active preventative work in relation to repeat missing incidents and the force holds monthly meetings to discuss key 'at risk' individuals to reduce repeat missing incidents.

As part of their approach, Sussex Police, together with the East Sussex Local Safeguarding Children's Board and young people's charity 'Catch 22', launched a service in April 2010 to help young runaways in East Sussex. The service provides mentoring for young people and aims to reduce the number of young people who go missing across East Sussex. The service uses volunteers to work with young people, their families and other professionals to address why they run away, and build supportive strategies to reduce the number of incidents. Investing time in mentoring young people and working with families has proven effective in reducing the amount of missing episodes among young people. A co-ordinator supports and supervises volunteers, working on a rota-basis between 8am and 2am, they assist the police with return home interviews and are available to offer on-going support to young people for as long as they need it.

### NATIONAL SUPPORT

- 4.19 To support delivery at a local level the UK Government will ensure national capability adds value by providing expertise and sharing knowledge of key themes and risks (e.g. in relation to child sexual exploitation)
- 4.20 To support local areas in understanding their roles, responsibilities and obligations, **statutory guidance on children who runaway or go missing from care will also be revised to give local authorities in England a clearer understanding of their duties.** The current guidance issued in 2009 requires local authorities to collect information about missing from home incidents and encourages local runaway and missing from home protocols to set out the arrangements for local information sharing to speed recovery of the child. **Local authorities in England must make regular reports to council members with responsibility for 'corporate parenting' on patterns of children going missing from care.**
- 4.21 Nationally, capability is in place within the Missing Persons Bureau and CEOP to review cases and provide immediate support to police forces and forces will want to make full use of this support. **By ensuring all cases are referred to national experts within three days and advising when a missing person is found this will ensure there is an effective and up to date database of missing adults and children in the UK.**
- 4.22 Unfortunately, missing persons cases can, and do sometimes, end in fatalities. Where this has happened Government believes it is key that these cases are closed as quickly as possible. To support this, the **Missing Persons Bureau has a key role to play in supporting effective case resolution through its robust cross matching service.** This service compares missing persons cases with unidentified persons and body cases on the missing persons database. **The role of**

**the Missing Persons Bureau as the centre for information exchange in missing person and unidentified cases is key** to ensuring that cases are not left open where information is held by different agencies that could result in closure of a case.

4.23 CEOP, who now have responsibility for the **Child Rescue Alert system** will immediately review its effectiveness and publish new guidance to forces in 2012 whilst also considering ways it can be developed through wider online and social media opportunities. CEOP will also **redevelop the ‘MissingKids’ website** to ensure full use is made of all tools available to help identify missing children.

4.24 In relation to vulnerable adults – the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) in England have an **alert system**, which is used to send out information to other colleagues about people they are concerned about who have gone missing. For example alerts may cover people with learning disabilities or dementia (and other vulnerable people) who go missing from care homes or their own homes. The joint **Westminster pilot** project (Reconnect Network) developed in partnership by the charity Missing People with support from the Department of Health resulted in the development of **a rigorously tested information sharing protocol which improved the safeguarding of vulnerable adults** and demonstrates a powerful example of how government can work with local partners to translate policy into practice.

4.25 Unfortunately some people who go missing do end up homeless. The **Government is committed to tackling rough sleeping** and has established the Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness to tackle the complex causes, not only housing, but just as importantly health, work and training. The Ministerial Working Group published its first report in July 2011, announcing the Government’s intention to roll out the Mayor of London’s ‘No Second Night Out’ approach

nationwide. This ensures that anyone coming onto the streets is quickly identified and receives help immediately. **In London, there is a 24-hour helpline and website so that members of the public, the emergency services and homeless people themselves can report and refer rough sleepers**, with an outreach worker dispatched to contact the person as quickly as possible. **This will help to quickly identify any missing people who are sleeping on the streets and ensure they are directed to the appropriate services.**

4.26 In Wales the Welsh Government set out a commitment in the **‘Ten Year Homelessness Plan for Wales 2009-2019’** to address rough sleeping and through government funding aims to establish a range of joined up, outreach, drop-in and accommodation based services being delivered by housing, healthcare, employment and support service providers. **National core standards for substance misuse** were issued in May 2010 and require substance misuse agencies to have **information sharing protocols in place to protect vulnerable adults.**

## WESTMINSTER PROTOCOL

The Westminster Protocol was started as a result of Missing People’s concern that there was no systematic process for sharing information on vulnerable missing adults between health service providers and other agencies. Delivered in partnership with the Department of Health, the two-way protocol allows Missing People and partners to request and share information relating to missing adults where there were concerns about their well being. The Protocol has enabled partners to improve their knowledge of missing incidents and missing people’s mental health needs. The Protocol has also helped with facilitating better joint working, enabling partners to make better informed assessments of vulnerable adults’ risks to harm and be better prepared to support vulnerable adults.

### **OBJECTIVE 3 PROVISION: PROVIDE MISSING PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES WITH SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE**

**There are a range of agencies that provide support to missing people and their families and we believe that when vulnerable children and adults go missing it is right that they and their families understand how and where to access support and guidance to minimise anxiety and distress at difficult times.**

### **SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AT RISK – PREVENTION AND ACTION (SCARPA) IN NEWCASTLE**

SCARPA is a joint Children's Society and Barnardo's project which works to safeguard children identified at risk of harm from going missing or sexual exploitation. The project works to support children to stop going missing; reduce risky behaviours and provide them with help to exit situations of exploitation. SCARPA provides support to young people who have been reported missing to the police and also receives referrals from other agencies. Meetings involving SCARPA, the police and social care prioritise the most 'at risk' young people who then receive support from the project. SCARPA also helps to facilitate return interviews with young people who have gone missing and who do not already have social care support.

In 2009/10, the service met with over 120 young people – over 75 of those were offered intensive support – as well as 17 sets of parents who worked directly with SCARPA. As a result there has been a 52% reduction in missing episodes for those children supported by SCARPA over the period 1 April 2009-31 March 2010.

### **LOCAL ACTION**

- 4.27 Organisations such as the Children's Society, Barnardo's, Barnardo's Cymru and the charity Missing People provide services, some local, some national to missing people and their families. These services can provide a lifeline to vulnerable children and also to the families of missing people at difficult times.
- 4.28 To make best use of these services **local areas should ensure frontline practitioners understand the services available in their area** and make full use of the support available from voluntary sector partners.
- 4.29 As the first responders to missing reports the **police should ensure all families of missing people are automatically signposted to support services** that are available to them (for example the 'Missing People' Charity helpline). In addition to this, families need to be **reassured that everything is being done to find their loved ones and police and partner agencies will want to ensure family members are informed in a timely manner about the progress of their case.**

## ‘MISSING PEOPLE’ CHARITY HELPLINE

‘Missing People’ provides a number of 24 hour helpline services to offer support to missing adults and children and their families. These confidential services aid in the search for missing people and help to safeguard vulnerable individuals, as well as provide emotional support and advice for the families of missing people.

Research shows that the first hours after an individual’s disappearance are of vital importance, therefore having such an easy to remember number is key in ensuring the relevant authorities are contacted immediately. From 2012, all Missing People helpline services will be integrated into 116 000. This development is a result of implementing European Directive 2009/136/EC and provides a single number for missing people and their families to call in each European Union country.

## NATIONAL SUPPORT

- 4.30 As well as the emotional difficulties families can face when a loved one goes missing, they can also face practical difficulties where a relative is presumed dead or where the disappearance of the main breadwinner places dependants left behind in precarious situations. These problems will often arise because they are deprived of the missing person’s income or cannot gain access to his or her assets.
- 4.31 The Government is committed to ensuring that there are appropriate systems in place for families to deal with these legal and financial problems, together with accessible practical guidance on how they should be used.
- 4.32 As part of this process the Government welcomes the recent work of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Runaway and Missing Children and Adults on support for families of missing people and the current inquiry of the Justice Committee of the House of Commons into presumption of death. In particular, **the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) will consider carefully the case for consulting on:**
- **Introducing presumption of death certificates in England and Wales, similar to those already in use in Scotland and Northern Ireland; and**
  - **Creating a role of guardian of a missing person giving the guardian access to the missing person’s assets, perhaps based on guardianship models already used in other jurisdictions, such as New South Wales in Australia.**
- 4.34 **MoJ intends to announce its initial conclusions when it has considered the outcome of the Justice Committee’s inquiry. It is hoped that this will be before the end of the current session of Parliament.**
- 4.35 The Ministry of Justice and the Missing Persons Bureau are also working together to draw up guidance for the police and the families of missing people on the circumstances where it may be possible for a coroner to open an inquest in cases where a missing person is presumed dead.
- 4.36 CEOP will help provide easier access to families to support available through the development of **a new online portal which will bring together a range of resources in one place and signpost family and friends of missing people to support services** available including for example, Childline, the ‘Missing People’ helpline and the **pan-Europe 116 000** support number for missing children and their families, when it is launched by the charity Missing People in 2012.
- 4.37 Unfortunately, some people who go missing do suffer fatalities and therefore it is important that capability exists to cross match unidentified person and body cases with a robust missing persons database. **The Missing Persons Bureau is currently conducting a review of the national data requirement to ensure the correct information is collected at a national**

**level to support the delivery of this service.**

The Government remains committed to the work of the Bureau in delivering cross matching services which enables closure for families where a missing person has died.

### **CASE STUDY – LUCY\***

Lucy was a shy, soft-spoken, 14-year-old who lived in a Children's Home. One November evening she ran away, and the first thing Lucy said when she called Runaway Helpline was, **“I saw your number in the phone box and thought you might be able to help”**. Lucy said she had her bag, coat and sleeping bag with her, and had run away from her placement. She said she was not happy there and that no one would listen to her. **“I didn't really want to run away,” she said, “but I'd had enough.”**

Missing People's Runaway Helpline call-taker encouraged Lucy to speak to her Social Worker about how she was feeling, which Lucy agreed was a good idea. Runaway Helpline passed the message to her Social Worker, asking them to call Lucy back. Half an hour later, Lucy phoned Runaway Helpline expressing her frustration that she had not heard from the Social Worker, and that there was a man outside the phone box asking her to go with him. As there was nowhere else for her to stay that night, Lucy wondered if she should go with him.

Runaway Helpline suggested that this did not sound like the safest option for her, and offered to do a conference call with her Social Worker to find a better option. Lucy was keen to speak to her Social Worker, and Runaway Helpline stayed on the line with them both as they decided what would be the best solution for Lucy that night. Lucy called Missing People the next day and thanked them for their help saying that, as a result of their support, she was also talking to her Social Worker about the possibility of being moved to a new Care Home.

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\*Not her real name

# 5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1 Delivering the objectives outlined in this strategy requires a range of local and national partners, including Government to provide their contribution to the prevention, protection and provision of support for missing people and their families.

## KEY PARTNERS

### LOCAL AUTHORITIES

5.2 Within local authorities, the issue of missing children and adults cuts across a number of areas, including homelessness, housing, mental health services, social care, children's services, education and young runaways provision. In the future the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JNSA) will be undertaken through the health and wellbeing boards, to analyse the current and future needs of the local community in relation to health and care service, linking to wider determinants of health. Based on the JNSA, the health and wellbeing boards will develop a joint health and wellbeing strategy of local priorities, which will inform the commissioning of local services. The pattern of missing people and actions to address this could also be part of this.

5.3 Local authorities have a statutory duty under the Children Act 2004 to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children within their area. They also have a duty under the Education Act 1996 to make arrangements to identify children missing education in their area. Additionally they have additional specific responsibilities in relation to particularly vulnerable groups of children and have corporate parenting responsibilities in relation to all 'looked after children' in their area. As such, Local Authorities' Children's Services are key and statutory partners in the local delivery of safeguarding missing children.

5.4 In partnership with the police, other agencies and voluntary sector partners local authorities should ensure local protocols are in place to define the roles and responsibilities in relation to missing

people, agree a multi-disciplinary approach to assessing risk and cover the basis on which return interviews will be delivered. Local Authorities should ensure they understand the picture of voluntary support in their area and how they can help support it.

### POLICE

5.5 The police have a key role in the protection of vulnerable people and are also key statutory partners in the safeguarding arena and have duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The police also have a wider role in protecting vulnerable people and are often the primary responder to a case where a child or vulnerable adult is reported missing and have a key role in establishing the whereabouts and helping to safely return a vulnerable missing person.

5.6 As 'missing' is often an indicator of crime, and in the case of children has been proven to be linked to some forms of serious and organised child sexual exploitation, forces should ensure that effective risk assessment and pro-active analysis is undertaken on all missing persons reports to ensure patterns can be identified, including with support from national capability to consider where they cross police force boundaries, and action taken to reduce the missing incidents and tackle any issues in relation to perpetrators.

### HEALTH

5.7 Health partners have a key role in identifying and protecting vulnerable people, since in many cases they will both have regular contact and hold valuable information on their whereabouts. In England, Local NHS Foundation Trusts and Acute Trusts (who manage hospitals), Mental Health Trusts and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are the frontline service providers who have both the contact and the searchable databases. In Wales, seven Local Health Boards, three NHS Trusts and 22 Local Authorities provide health and social

care services to adults and children. There is an expectation on these agencies that arrangements will be in place to ensure this information can be shared between partners.

- 5.8 The links between mental health and risks of missing also means that they are a key local partner in the delivery of missing outcomes for vulnerable adults and children, so Mental Health Trusts and CAMHS teams are crucial. Hospitals, mental health services and care homes for vulnerable adults have responsibilities to work with police and wider partners to risk assess and put in place effective strategies to prevent and reduce the numbers of missing episodes.

## LOCAL MULTI-AGENCY STRUCTURES

- 5.9 Preventing people from going missing and protecting them when they do go missing is a truly multi-agency task. In addition to the preventative roles of the LSCB, and SABs, areas should develop individual partnership models that bring agencies together in the delivery of missing outcomes on the ground for example through co-located multi-agency teams and local partnership models. There are already a variety of these in place across England and Wales and areas should consider and put in place arrangements that work in their area. Whatever these arrangements they must provide for effective case management and risk assessment of missing people in the area and enhance the information sharing on these cases – aiding better identification and action on vulnerability and effective case resolution of missing cases.
- 5.10 Through properly structured arrangements across all sectors, this will ensure that children, young people and adults in vulnerable situations who go missing, can receive additional support and exactly the right professionals needed to support them. The benefits will include receiving tailor-made support in the most efficient way, early identification and intervention, easier or quicker access to services or expertise, better support for

parents and the families of the missing, better quality services and a reduced need for more specialist services.

## VOLUNTARY SECTOR

- 5.11 Whilst there are a range of statutory partners with responsibilities in relation to missing people the voluntary sector has a key role to play in delivery of effective outcomes. Only through a truly partnership approach involving local authorities children's services, the police and the important charity and voluntary sector will we bring about the step change in outcomes we want to achieve.
- 5.12 Voluntary sector organisations already provide a range of services to missing people and their families. At a national level the charity 'Missing People' provides a range of support services for missing people and their families through their helpline and other services. 'Missing People' also provides services to the police and to other statutory agencies, including children's services. Primarily, the charity can provide targeted national case publicity for missing people who are thought to have moved beyond individual police force boundaries through its extensive online, media and poster networks and manages the sightings and information this generates from the public.
- 5.13 At a local level, the range of services provided for example, by the Children's Society and Barnardo's are also key in the delivery of the provision of effective support to missing people and their families. The Salvation Army, Samaritans, Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and other independent localised services are also sources of valuable support. These local initiatives deliver real impacts and statutory partners (police, health and LAs) should ensure they understand the local provision within their area and that they make appropriate referrals to, and provide support for, to these partnerships.



## NATIONAL CAPABILITY

### CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

5.14 Whilst the vast majority of cases where people go missing will be resolved at a local level, Government believes it has a role to play in supporting this delivery by providing the strategic policy framework in which we can all understand and play our role. Through this strategy we have sought to clarify existing roles and responsibilities and support local areas to put in place enhanced local arrangements. The Government is committed to this important issue and will continue to provide leadership and support to local areas in delivering the aims of this strategy, including through the spread of local effective practice but also by continuing to ensure that appropriate national capability is in place to provide targeted support to local agencies in this area.

### CEOP

5.15 At a national level CEOP have the lead responsibility for missing children issues. CEOP's new missing children's capability will lead the national response working in partnership with police forces, NGOs and the wider child protection community in providing preventative support through the provision of educational tools, products and training to children and professionals, as well as direct operational support to local forces in line with the role of a national centre.

5.16 To aid delivery of the prevention and protection of missing children, CEOP will provide support for police operations through targeted research and analysis. This will be done for example through the development of problem profiles on the nature and scale of the issues and emerging trends – such as the recent thematic assessment on child sexual exploitation. This will enable CEOP to build a better understanding of how and why children go missing which can be shared

with the police and other agencies involved in protecting missing children.

5.17 CEOP will also provide operational support for police forces and missing children by extending the CEOP 'one stop shop' to include online missing children resources. This capability will focus on missing children referrals from police forces, Child Rescue Alert, 'MissingKids' and tactical advice to police investigating missing children cases and link the range of services and expertise that can be brought to bear in cases of missing children that have a distinctive national and international complexion and where local police forces or international agencies request such assistance.

5.18 Lastly, by ensuring that co-ordination arrangements and capability are in place to manage complex or high profile missing children cases, CEOP will strengthen the UK response in this area. This will ensure that, in any future cases, the UK will have in place a clear lead agency to respond to and co-ordinate the UK law enforcement response to finding a child where children may have gone missing or been abducted, be that in the UK, or abroad.

### NATIONAL MISSING PERSONS BUREAU

5.19 The UK Government remains convinced of the added value of the Missing Persons Bureau in providing periodic national assessments of the nature and scale of missing incidents and of its work in particular to deliver cross matching services of missing persons and unidentified persons and body cases.

5.20 The Bureau maintains a database of people reported missing and with CEOP, provides tactical advice to police investigations involving missing people using specialist resources to identify new lines of enquiry. Tactical advice is also available to support police investigations in particularly high risk missing person incidents, no body murders and cases of unidentified people and bodies.

- 5.21 We believe this role will be strengthened by the decision to move the Missing Persons Bureau into the new National Crime Agency (NCA) which will also ensure the national response to missing persons benefits not only from closer partnership working with CEOP but also from the enhanced capabilities that will exist within the new Agency.
- 5.22 The NCA will possess a greatly improved intelligence capability and, for the first time, will have the authority to coordinate, prioritise and task operational activity across law enforcement agencies. The national response to missing persons will be enhanced by its ability to draw on intelligence, expertise and assets from across the NCA.
- 5.23 The Bureau will transfer to the Serious Organised Crime Agency during 2012, prior to the NCA becoming fully operational in 2013.

## 6. Making an Impact

- 6.1 Government believes that we can all work together to better protect and support missing people and their families. We hope this strategy will provide a framework of support for all of us to consider our role and for local areas to put in place arrangements that work for them.
- 6.2 To support this and to raise awareness of our strategic objectives the Government will identify opportunities to promote and support conversations at a local level on delivery of the strategy's ambitions, including through national, regional and local events. We will also review our progress through regular engagement with partners to consider the strategy's impact and will hold an annual roundtable with partners and stakeholders, chaired by the lead Government Minister for missing persons policy to consider how improvements will be measured and to assess the overall impact of our efforts to deliver the objectives and change set out in this strategy.
- 6.3 Government will also work with national Inspectorates, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and Ofsted in England and the Health Inspectorate Wales (HIW), Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) in Wales to ensure accountability and transparency is clear on issues around tackling missing people. To support this, HMIC will undertake a thematic inspection of the police management of missing persons in 2012/13 whilst the CQC as the independent regulator of health and adult social care, will continue to receive notifications from non-NHS care and residential homes about any incidents reported to the police – including missing persons as well as weekly notifications of persons detained under the 1983 Mental Health Act going missing and will ensure this data is used as part of the process of assessing performance.
- 6.4 Similarly, in relation to children's services and children's homes, Ofsted are currently working with other inspectorates as they consider how to implement recommendations from the Munro Review of Child Protection in England which is considering the multi-agency working within child protection. Building on the changes introduced in the new National Minimum Standards for Children's Homes, Ofsted will also carry out unannounced inspections twice a year which will consider compliance with the standards in dealing with children who go missing.
- 6.5 By clarifying the roles and responsibilities we all have in protecting and supporting missing people and their families we hope this strategy provides a platform for all agencies to consider their contribution and play their part in protecting vulnerable children and adults who go missing and supporting their families. The Government firmly believes that if we all work together we can deliver the step change in delivery needed at a local level to ensure collectively that we are providing vulnerable missing children and adults and their families with the help, protection and support they deserve and need.



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