**SAFEGUARDING: MISSING FROM CARE POLICY**

## Policy Statement:

This policy sets out the values, principles and policies underpinning SILVER LINE HOMES [SHL]-Purley’s approach for when a child for whom it is responsible is missing, particularly children for whom it is providing a service.

Through its policy and procedures, SLH-Purley also seeks to comply with the Children’s Home (England) Regulations 2015;

**Regulation 34.4** *The registered person must prepare and implement a policy (“the missing child policy”) setting out—*

*(a) the steps taken, and to be taken, to prevent children from being absent without permission; and*

*(b) the procedures to be followed, and the roles and responsibilities of persons working at the home, in relation to a child who is, or has been, so absent.*

to report serious instances to LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer)/Safeguarding Children Board’s (or where in operation, Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)) and OFSTED and take the appropriate actions in the event of child going missing from their home, or event of an accident where the organisation retains responsibility for that child’s safety.

The first responsibility of all staff is to ensure the safety of the child placed with SLH-Purley*,* especially when a child may be particularly at risk whilst out in the wider community without the immediate support of a responsible carer. Whilst the Policy recognises that every child needs to develop the skills to keep themselves safe and free from danger it is essential, they do not put themselves at risk of harm during this process. SLH-Purley will take steps to ensure the safety of the child whilst they are in our care and engage with them to explain the possible risks and hazards they may face if they are out alone.

SLH-Purley also encourage children to reflect on their relationships, to explore through discussion the differences between mutually caring relationships and those that may be exploitative.

Children are further encouraged to value themselves, and we aim to empower them by making them aware of their rights, giving them reasonable expectations and encouraging them to see the police as professionals who will assist them in times of crisis.

It is essential that SLH-Purley are aware of the risks each individual child may face, to do this, a risk assessment must be carried out to assess the level of vulnerability of a child and how this may be reduced by timely planning and action. However, it is recognised that there will be many active children who value their independence and would appreciate spending time out in the local community without raising concern. Thus, childrens’ need for close supervision must always be balanced against their rights to make their own decisions regarding their movements and whereabouts.

It is important to develop positive and trusting relationships with children and to explain our reasons for acting in ways that they might see as restricting their freedom. Staff will liaise with partner agencies, including the police, social services, and education provider to assess general aspects of risks in the local environment.

During the period following the referral of a child, SLH-Purley will request up to date local authority risk assessment in order that we are aware of any concern which may be current regarding a child’s safety. This might be affected by the proximity of the placement to their family home, or areas frequented by adults or other children with whom the referred child may have experienced difficulties or are at risk of harm/danger from.

**Background**:

The issue of missing can be complex; people in quite different situation – from a child being abducted by force or a child who chooses to leave the home for several reasons may be labelled as ‘*missing*’. Defining what it means to go missing allows service providers to understand the issue and to provide the necessary support.

**Missing defined**:

‘*A break in contact which either the missing person or someone else defines as going missing, which may be either intentional or unintentional*’. (**Biehal, Mitchell and Wade**, 2003:2)

‘Anyone *whose whereabouts is unknown whatever the circumstances of disappearance**. They will be considered missing until located and their well-being or otherwise established*’. (**ACPO, 2005: 8**)

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

* **Child**: For the purposes of this document a child is anyone under 18;
* **Runaway**: A child who is away from their home or placement without the knowledge and consent of their parent or carer or because they have been forced out of the family home or do not wish to return;
* **Missing Child**: A child reported as missing to the police by their family or carers. Any child who is away from their home or placement, their whereabouts is unknown or cannot be established and the behaviour is out of character, and/or the circumstances of the child's disappearance or the child's age and vulnerability means that there is cause to be concerned for their welfare or safety;
* **Unauthorised Absence**: A Looked After Child whose whereabouts is known but who is not at their placement or place, they are expected to be, and the carer has concerns, or the incident has been notified to the local authority or the police;
* **Absconded**: If a child or young person is on bail or the subject of a criminal court order requiring them to remain at a particular address and they run away from that address, this will be a criminal matter and the child must be reported as missing to the police immediately;

## Preventing Missing Persons Incidents:

Staff must remain vigilant *at all times* and try to be aware of exactly where children who are in our care are at any given time, especially at times children may leave the home without giving indication of where they are going.

Action taken to avoid false alarms includes the simple precaution of encouraging children to inform the home’s staff on duty when they are going out and to give both a time they expect to return and a contact name and telephone number. All such arrangements are recorded.

## Raising the Alarm:

SLH-Purley will follow the Philomena Protocol to support the recording and notification of a missing episode of a young person. **Appendix 1** will explain what the Philomena Protocol is.

During the placement planning meeting, basic information will be taken down which will include the child’s mobile telephone number, contact numbers for significant family and friends and a recent photograph. Also, the **Looked After Child Information Sharing Form ‘Grab Pack’** – section 1 (**Appendix 2**) will also be completed during the placement planning meeting (or within the first week of the placement commencing) and updated regularly and in the light of any additional information or concerns. The child will be also reminded being out and the risks, especially late at night.

Discussion will take place with each child to ascertain their interests and hobbies and staff will endeavour to engage positively with children with the aim of developing those interests and building relationships.

When a child leaves the home the logbook recording will include the time they left; what clothing they are wearing, and the child will be asked who they are visiting and where and for an estimated time of return.

Where a child does not return at the anticipated time staff will contact them to remind them of the arrangements agreed and to ascertain their whereabouts, expected return time and welfare. If a child does not return at the agreed time and their whereabouts are unknown, staff must complete all relevant enquiries to trace the child using information in the Grab Pack as well as their own knowledge of the child to assist. This may include visiting locations the child could be and contacting relevant family and associates, ensuring that the details of times of these enquires are accurately logged. All details regarding the missing child will be completed in Philomena Protocol – Section 2 (**Appendix 2**). If the staff have been unable to locate the child, staff will use the MPS Online facility to report the child missing. The completed Looked After Child Information Sharing Form will be emailed to the police and child’s social worker, stored on the child’s file.

Upon notifying the police of the missing child through the MPS Online facility, staff are still expected to actively continue to enquiries to locate the child.

SLH-Purley’s priority will always be to support children to return; this **may** include arranging a taxi to collect the child. Once they have returned, the child will be welcomed back, and checks will be sensitively made to ensure they are well and not in any distress. Once staff have made sure that the child is safe and well, staff are required to use the Online facility to update police of the locating or return of the child to the home.

The allocated social worker will be asked to visit them to ascertain their reasons for going missing and whether the child has any fears or concerns. Where a child is missing for a longer period or where the number of missing episodes is excessive, a request will be made for a strategy meeting to review the suitability of the home and to discuss additional strategies to keep the child safe.

## Roles and Responsibilities:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Roles** | **Responsibility** |
| Referral Information | Registered Manager |
| Risk Assessment | Registered Manager / Support Staff |
| Photograph & updating information | Home Staff (Keyworker) |
| Knowledge of whereabouts of young person | Staff on duty |
| Contact with YP/Family/SW or EDT | Staff on duty |
| Continuing efforts to contact YP | Staff on duty |
| Initiating Philomena Protocol | Staff on duty |
| Monitoring of Philomena Protocol | Registered Manager |
| Notifying Police | Staff on duty / Registered Manager |
| Ongoing Liaison | Staff on duty / Registered Manager |
| Independent Interview | Social Worker |

**Signed**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Date**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix 1**

# Looked After Child Information Sharing Form

COMPLETED and UPDATED record to be provided to POLICE

Please use this template to update information on children in your care, or for whom you are responsible.

**Section 1**

**To be completed at the start of the placement and maintained throughout**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Full Name:**  **Previous names**  **Nickname/Street name:** | | | **Recent Image of Child** |
| **DoB:**  . | **Current home address:**  .  **Primary contact:**  **Office Tel No:**  **Mobile Tel No:** | |
| **Contact and Social Media**  **Mobile phone number:**  **Facebook Username**  **Twitter Username**  **BBM detail/PIN Access Code:**  **Email addresses:**  **Any other social media: (Instagram etc)** | **Height: ………….**  **Weight: …………**  **Build: …………...**  **Complexion: …………**  **Eye Colour: …………**  **Hair: ……………..**  **Marks, scars, tattoos:** |
| **Physical/Psychological disabilities** |
| **Length at placement:**  **Previous placement/Home Address:** | |
| **Ethnicity:**  **Nationality:** |
| **Legal status (including orders/Immigration)** | | | **School/College/Employer (including contact details)** |
| **Medical requirements – Including Medication** | | |
| **Placing Authority:** | | **Social Worker name:**  **Contact (phone/Mobile/email)**  **Detail of Child protection plan if relevant** | |
| **Childs Next Of Kin – Including relationship and contact:** | |
| **OYSTER Card Number & Adult Sponsor (U16):** | | **Bank Account Details and Access to funds:**  **Eg Debit card etc** | |
| **Does the child smoke, consume alcohol or illegal/recreational drugs?**  **Provide full details:** | | **Provide details of the child’s friends, include their home address and contact details:** | |
| **Details of other associates and family members that the child has contact with, include their home address and contact details:** | |
| **Locations Frequented/Places or worship**  ***If the child has been missing before, include where they were found*** | |
| **Risk Factors – Victim or potential victim, of forced marriage, FGM or trafficking, or sexual exploitation** | | | |
| **Risk Factors – At risk from Gang Involvement/Membership**  ***Consider new acquaintances, unexplained cash funds, regular travel patterns*** | | | |
| **Risk Factors – Is the child previously known for Suicide Attempts or Self Harm Tendencies:**  ***Provide details including dates*** | | | |

**Section 2**

**To be updated when the child goes missing**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Circumstances:** | |
| **Risk Factors - Recent Behaviour or incidents that have occurred leading up to being missing**  ***Victim of crime or bullying, problems with school/college, bereavement/life changing events.***  ***Include recent ABSENT or UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE details*** | |
| **Risk Factors - Does the child need essential medication or treatment not readily available to them e.g. asthma inhaler, insulin** | |
| **Place last seen:** |  |
| **Time & Date:** |  |
| **By whom:** |  |
| **Who with:** |  |
| **Description:** |  |
| **Reporting person Name, role and contact details** |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Missing Incident – Attempts to Locate**  Contact Enquiries with Known Friends, Relatives and Acquaintances | | | | |
| **Date** | **Time** | **Name/Contact No and**  **Address** | **Result** | |
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| **Notes** | | | | |
| **Completed by** | | | | **Date / Time** |
| **Received by** | | | | **Date / Time** |

**This form should be emailed to police when the child goes missing, and must include an up to date photo**

**Appendix 2**

