



What to do when  
a child goes missing

A Guide for Professionals

Calderdale  
Council

## Which children are more likely to run away?

- Children not living with their families
- Children who are absent from school
- Those who have problems with drugs, alcohol or have been involved with the Police
- Children who consider themselves disabled or with learning difficulties
- Children living in separated families



## When a child runs away they are at risk of serious harm

Running away or going missing can be an early indicator of child sexual exploitation (CSE). This guide gives some simple advice on what steps you need to take in order to respond to young people who run away from home or care and how to manage the risks involved.



## Why do children run away from home?

- Trouble at school
- Being Bullied
- Family quarrels
- Family break down
- The arrival of a new step parent
- In protest of rules/ boundaries
- Drug and alcohol problems
- Issues around sexuality
- Problems elsewhere: young people may run away to adults who want to exploit them for criminal or sexual activity

A black and white photograph of a door with a 'POLICE' tape across it. The tape is white with the word 'POLICE' in bold black letters. The door has a handle and a lock. The background is dark and out of focus.

**POLICE**

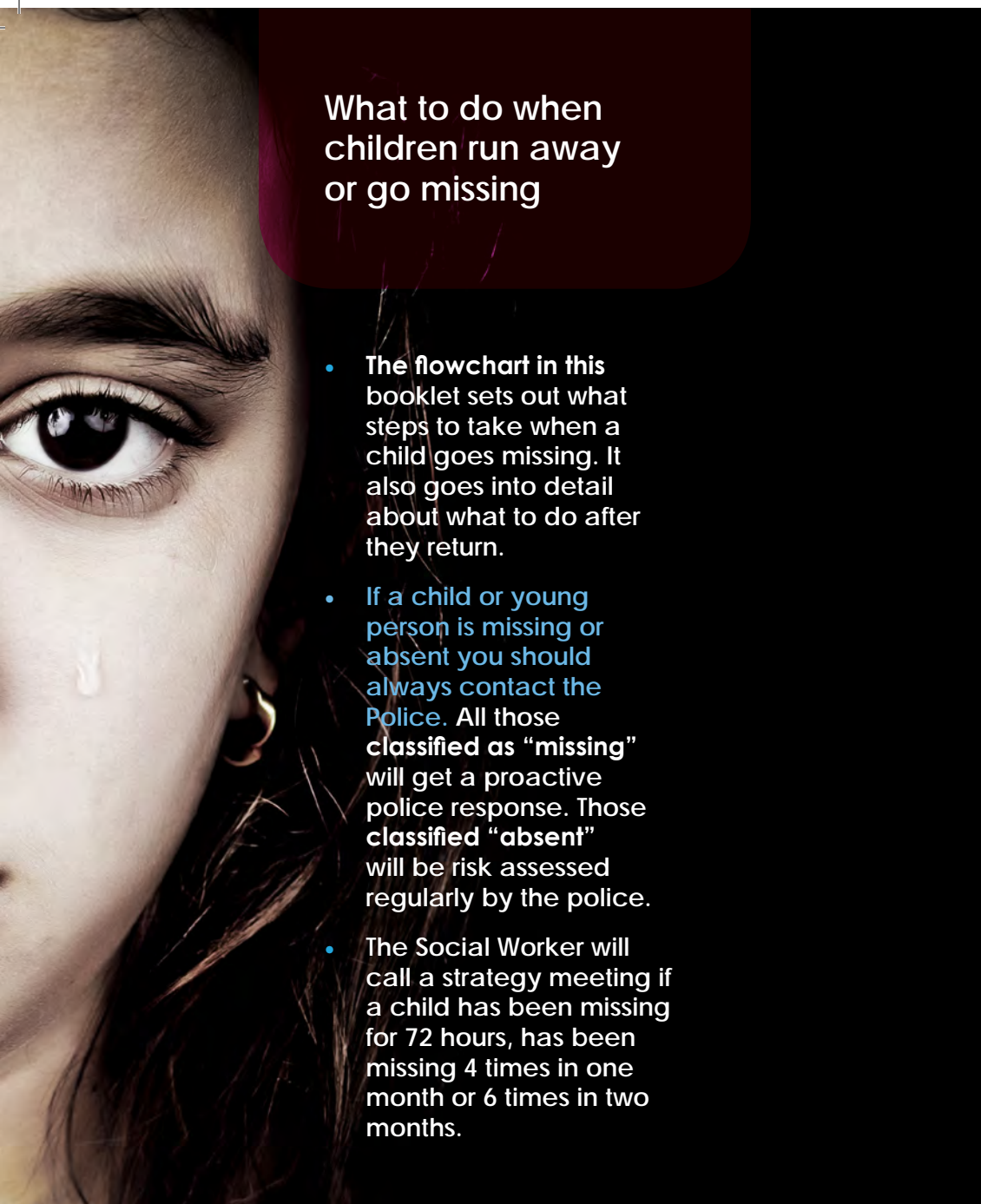
*Where a child or young person is missing the Police should always be informed. You do not need to wait 24 hours- report straight away*

## Police definitions are as follows:

- **Absent - No apparent risk**  
There is no apparent risk of danger to either the subject or the public
- **Low risk**  
There is no immediate concern for welfare of the missing person or the public
- **Medium Risk**  
There is concern for the welfare of the missing person or the public
- **High Risk**  
The subject may be victim of serious crime, may suffer death or cause serious injury or cause of death or serious injury

## Other terms used by the local authority are:

- **Away from Placement without Authorisation / Unauthorised absence:** The whereabouts of a child who is (looked after) are known but they are 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 (*see further information overleaf*).
- **Missing from care:** A child looked after who is not at their placement or the place they are expected to be and their whereabouts are not known.
- **Temporary absence:** A child goes absent as above but is NOT looked after.
- **Runaway:** A child has run away or feels they have been forced to leave.



## What to do when children run away or go missing

- The flowchart in this booklet sets out what steps to take when a child goes missing. It also goes into detail about what to do after they return.
- If a child or young person is missing or absent you should always contact the Police. All those classified as “missing” will get a proactive police response. Those classified “absent” will be risk assessed regularly by the police.
- The Social Worker will call a strategy meeting if a child has been missing for 72 hours, has been missing 4 times in one month or 6 times in two months.

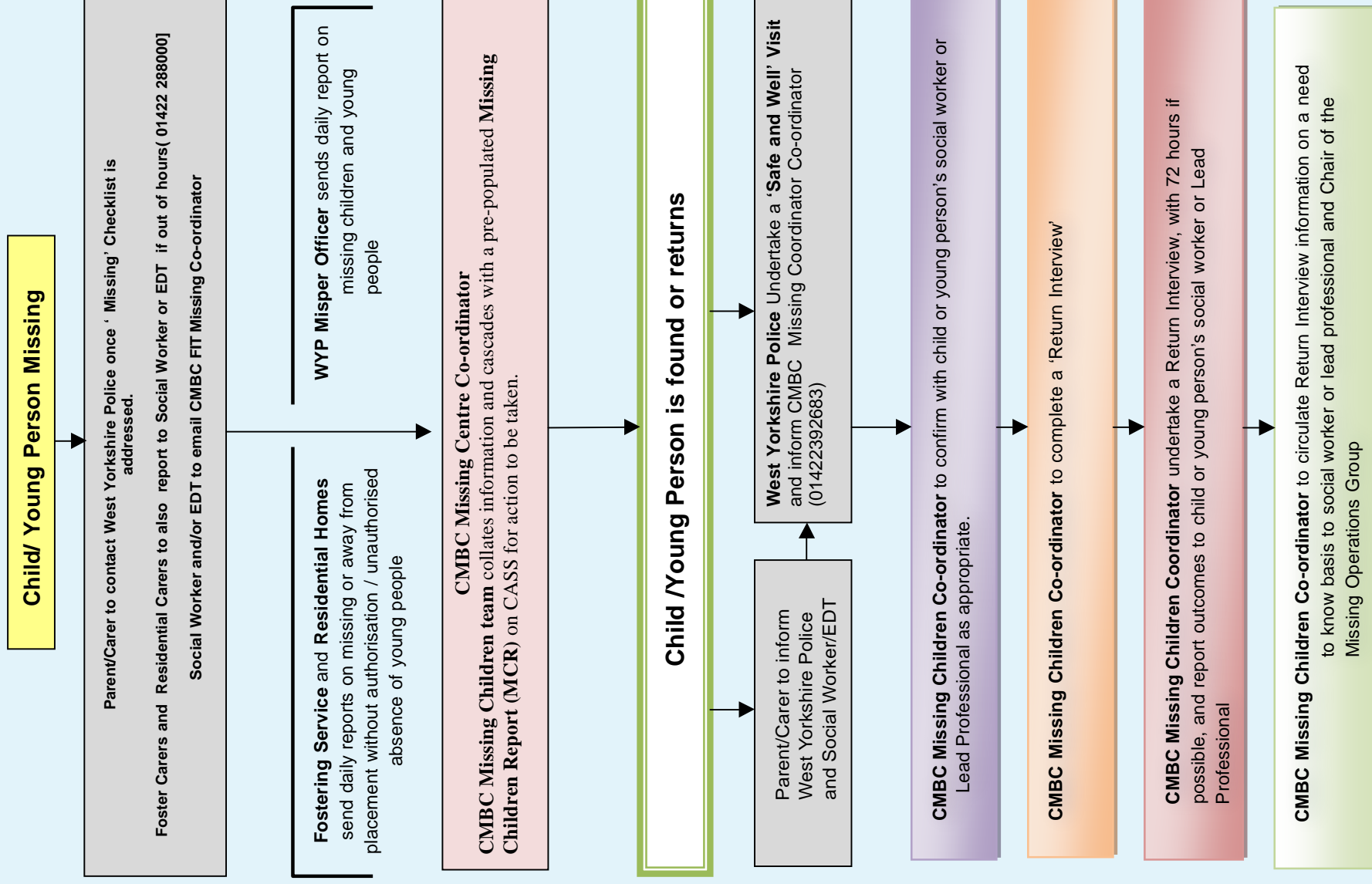
## Away from Placement without Authorisation / Unauthorised Absence

If a child goes missing from a children’s home or other placement and **there is no obvious immediate risk and their whereabouts are known** steps should be taken by carers to:

- Find out why they are absent
- Find out their likely intentions
- Establish their whereabouts and wellbeing
- Monitor risk and contact police if there is any concern.

The Police will not treat unauthorised absence cases as “missing” or “absent”. The Children’s Home or other care placement should keep accurate records of the number of times absent without authorisation, length of time absent, location during absence and other information. The risk assessment should be continually updated and Police informed where risk identified.

## Calderdale Procedures for Children Missing from Home or Care



For further information see [Calderdale Council Missing Child Policy 2016](#)  
OR CONTACT : [CMBC Missing Children Co-ordinator 01422 392683](#)

For further information  
please contact:

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please contact:

- **Service Manager -**  
Children Looked After  
**01422 392809**
- **Youth Works -**  
(support for young people  
subject to sexual exploitation)
- **CMBC Missing Children**  
Co-ordinator  
**01422 392683**
- **West Yorkshire Police**  
**101 - Non Emergency Number**
- **Calderdale Children's**  
**Social Care -**  
**01422 393336**

