

Missing Audit Part 1 – summary

Why was this audit done?

Children and young people who are missing from home or care is a priority for London Borough of Tower Hamlets in the links to exploitation

What did we do?

Part 1 of the missing audit focused on 40 young people (20 from home and 20 from care) who had been regular missing young people between January 2019 and December 2019

The aim of this audit was to see review the standard of Return Home Interviews (RHI's) and to ensure that partners from children's social care, health, police, education and other services work effectively together to prevent children from going missing from either home or care and act accordance with guidance when they do go missing.

What is working well

Metropolitan Police Safe and Well checks are happening.

Independent Return Interviews are taking place with children and young people.

Strategy meetings are held in line with the missing protocol

Strategy meetings evidence that the risk and concerns are identified

Strategy meetings evidence clear plans aiming to reduce missing episodes and most addressed how to minimise risks related to exploitation

Most of the cases evidenced effective and efficient multi-agency working

Many of the children/young people missing from home engaged in the Independent Return Home Interviews

Areas for improvement

The quality of return home interviews needs to be improved. Return home interviews for children missing from home were of better quality than children missing from care

Quality of engagement and direct work with young people addressing the concerns around the missing episodes and the risks related to this needs improving

Missing episode not being routinely discussed / explored with or by IRO for children who are Looked after

Not all agencies had the same understanding in relation to categories of missing and their associated risk

More needs to be explored in the RHI as to why the child is going missing

Voice of the child needs to be more evident on the file in relation to the missing episodes

Recommendations

Evidence on the RHI and the file needs to show how we are making a difference to the child/young person and how we can evidence this, what impact has been achieved

Always capture the voice of the child in the work

When doing an RHI where possible do not just follow the script on the RHI try to ask follow up questions and explore the answers further with the child

Try and understand the reasons for going missing, what are the triggers, what can be done to reduce further incidents and document your analysis

Always be mindful of risk indicators, especially Exploitation and Serious Youth Violence in regards to children/young people who have been missing.

Remember to consider physical appearance, ethnicity, culture, religion, language or disability as this information may be important.

Less RHI's need to be done on the telephone

Be mindful of professionals involved and keep them informed of any missing or return home episodes, particularly if they are actively involved with the young person.

Be tenacious and flexible in your attempts to engage vulnerable young people