



**THINK CHILD.  
THINK SAFEGUARDING.**

# London's Philomena Protocol

## An introduction for partners



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## Concept

The Philomena Protocol is an evidence based problem-solving initiative that seeks to address recurring missing episodes, problematic volume and poor reporting approaches occurring from children's care homes and other provisions across London.

It is primarily a collaborative partnership between local policing, children's care homes and other provisions based on existing and accepted practice but where meaningful engagement can be sustained long term.

## Necessity & Outcomes

Research has revealed that high volumes of repeat missing episodes from care homes and other provisions is indicative of lack of care planning, insufficient knowledge of risk or preparedness for missing episodes and a disregard for expected joint responsibility in responding to a child or young person who does not return home as expected.

Expected outcomes include greater awareness and understanding of roles, appreciation of risk and an enhanced responses through better operational practice in the placement. Reduction of unnecessary police intervention in the life of a looked after child.

## Key principles

Supportive and sustained engagement between the police, care homes and other provisions based on necessity. Understanding context of significant volume is crucial.

Workable and beneficial agreement setting clear expectations of stakeholders

Philomena Protocol underpins consistent approach of achievable minimum standards.

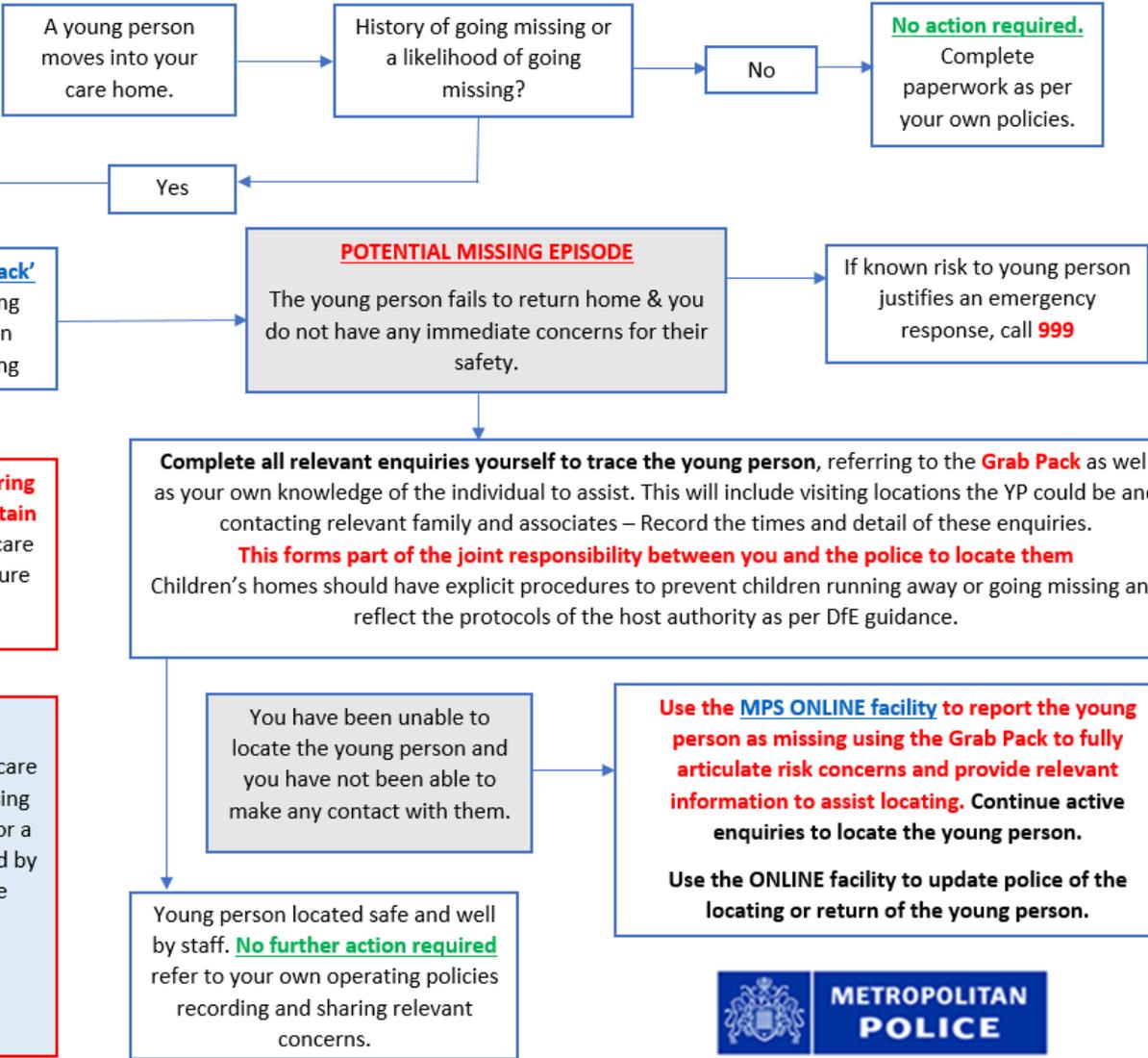


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**PHILOMENA  
PROTOCOL**  
Found & Safe



**Complete LSCB Information Sharing 'Grab Pack'** in line with Appendix 4 LSCB Children missing from home & care (London Child Protection Procedures) and store within the care setting

**IMPORTANT: Complete the information sharing form at the start of the placement and maintain throughout.** If pre-incident risk assessment/care plan is not provided by placing authority ensure this is obtained as a matter of **urgency**

**Safeguarding Planning**  
If the child or young person placed into your care presents as immediately at risk through missing episodes, police and partners should agree for a Trigger plan to be created. This will be owned by the MPU (Missing Persons Unit). To initiate partnership planning, email:  
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## Locally delivered process according to identified problem profile

Philomena Protocol underpins strategy to ensure informed decision-making and information sharing. **Risk-relevant!**

Being a looked after child should not invite unnecessary police intervention.

Appreciation of risk at earliest stage allowing parties to plan response.

Police and care home/provision liaison maintained to ensure continued learning, communication and improved safeguarding

Minimise unnecessary police attendance, intervention and contact.

Stakeholder meetings to share progress, incident reviews and maintain good practice – accountability.

Escalation response to poor practice, unwillingness to improve.

## PREPAREDNESS THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

### Partners

- Local Authority Children's Services - Stakeholder agreement to approve Philomena Protocol as default response to looked after children at risk of going missing
- Agenda inclusion at relevant SCB and Missing Panels across each Local Authority to ensure sustainability and momentum

### Data

- BCU identifies problematic demand locally through MPS data
- Regardless of whether care provision is regulated/unregulated, semi-independent, privately run etc - Excessive demand for police intervention needs to be highlighted for a problem-solving response - BCU select care placements to engage

### Initiate

- Strong and supportive engagement initiated with care home management and staff - BCU should seek to understand demographic of care setting in terms of complexity of placed children - Volume may NOT reflect poor practice in every case
- Philomena Protocol agreed as minimum standard
- Joint Responsibility Agreement - Enhance standards of placement management and engagement with local police - information sharing and harm prevention
- Location denoted on CAD as Philomena (PP) Care Home

### Monitor

- Strategised engagement should be achievable and support aims of better local practice and reduced demand for police interventions
- Police & care management meetings agreed/venue 'adoption' by DWO/MSD to enhance relationship. MPC education input to improve practice & awareness of care responsibilities (regulations)
- Strong BCU ownership promoting longevity and effective sustainability

### Escalate

- Continued poor performance around reporting and response to missing by care home management and staff will necessitate escalation in every case
- Placing authority notified of issues affecting care of placed child - action required
- Policing lead and DCS challenge operating standards of home
- Legal process to force closure of care home on grounds of poor care



## **An approach for London – Delivered locally by engaged partnerships**

Missing incidents in London are reducing for the first time in over a decade but those involving children have remained static at nearly 28,000 investigations per year. Existing data shows that heavy patterns of repeat missing from care do not generate problem-solving engagement to prevent incidents or over-reporting. A lack of any proactive response to locate or consider the necessity to report based on what is known about the child results in procedural reporting rather than action arising from informed concern. This can harm the relationship between the child and the care placement and risk unnecessary police intervention in a child's life.

## **What does supportive engagement look like?**

Supported by a local agreement outlining expectation, the MPS are seeking to support care homes in a number of ways. Regular, sustainable contact with neighbourhood policing teams and progress meetings with BCU safeguarding officers. Coordinated assistance from MPS Missing Person Coordinators which will include best practice guidance (Reporting methods and actions, managing a return), collaborative guidance from The Children's Society, Police Search methods and further bespoke guidance developed locally.

## **Strategic Partner Support**

This work supports outcomes sought by MOPAC, Ofsted, DfE, and the Howard League for Penal Reform. The Philomena Protocol is NPCC endorsed and was recently awarded Gold in the Public Sector Transformation awards (health & social care category). The MPS seek the support of all London Councils and Directors of Children's Services in order to set optimum standards of practice and care amongst children's care homes and other provisions across London.



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