

MCT Process

Allocation: Missing episodes from the past 24 hours will be passed to the practice manager; on a Monday these will be from the weekend too. These will then be allocated between the engagement workers, usually early on in the morning.

Research: Search the young person on CareFirst; are they open to social care? Are they known to social care? Have they had previous missing episodes? Have they got any identified communication needs?

Communication: You will receive management directions specific to each allocation via email. If the young person is under the age of 16; identify who has parental responsibility and contact them to gain consent to interview the young person. Use this as an opportunity to discuss current circumstances and their understanding of the young person's missing episode.

If the young person is 16 or over; you can contact them directly to gain consent to interview them, however it is good practice to notify social workers, parents, and placements.

Arrangement: An IRI can take place at home or at school, so long as an adult is present in the building. Social workers and parents may be able to offer advice as to where the young person is likely to engage best, and what times may be better for them. Always try and keep the young person involved in this arrangement where possible.

All IRI's should be arranged within 72 hours where possible; however there will always be some cases which will hold extenuating circumstances.

Once an appointment is arranged, notify your practice manager and add it to your electronic diary. It may also be appropriate to notify the social worker.

Conducting the IRI: Take notes if this is helpful to you, but be careful that this does not become a barrier to the young person engaging with you. At the start of the interview, remember to explain to the young person the remit of your role, your responsibility to safeguard, and your responsibility regarding data protection. Call your practice manager once you're out of your interview to let them know how it went and that you are safe.

Reporting: If there are any safeguarding concerns, it is important to email these directly to a social worker if they have one; even if you speak to them over the phone, it is good practice to follow this up with an email. If the young person does not have an allocated social worker, you may have to put a referral into MASH; discuss this with your practice manager. Write up the IRI on care first; once this is authorised you must send it to the missing persons unit, the allocated social worker, and the IRO, if applicable. Ensure all emails with personal and sensitive information in them, are classified as "OFFICIAL SENSITIVE".

Completing the IRI report

Identifying common trigger factors for missing episodes:

- Substance misuse
- Child sexual exploitation
- Placement breakdown
- Challenging relationships at home
- Contact with peers inc. new relationships etc.
- Contact with family
- Gang affiliation
- Being a victim of crime
- Being a victim of abuse [sexual/physical/emotional/financial/honour based]
- Poor mental health *- Emotional Wellbeing*
- Radicalisation *- Education Disruption*
- Bullying
- Involvement in offending/anti –social behaviour
- Enjoyment of rule-breaking behaviour/adventure

Young people may go missing for many reasons, but triggers can usually be identified from the list above; these are recorded in the IRI report. Sometimes they will tell you directly, but information from parents, carers and professionals can be equally as valuable.

Identifying Vulnerabilities:

Vulnerabilities can be identified from the interview with the young person, conversations with professionals and carers, and from details on previous IRI reports. It is important to clarify from which source you have identified the vulnerabilities of the young person, and to note which ones are current, and which ones are historic.

Identifying what needs to change to prevent further missing episodes:

Suggest interventions which may be suitable for addressing some of the vulnerabilities and triggers identified from the interview. Be specific and action things to specific professionals when possible. If the young person refused to engage; specify a professional who may be able to cover the missing episode with them.

Completing an Independent Return Interview with a young person

Engagement

Be versatile in your approach with young people; each young person is different and it is important to be aware of these differences in order to best engage them. 'Motivational Interviewing Techniques' can be very useful.

- Before an interview, identify if the young person has any communication needs, including needing an interpreter; you can use language line for this.
- Ask the young person if they are happy to be interviewed alone, if there is someone else in the room, ask if they are happy for them to be there.
- A lot of the young people we work with respond to a casual approach; try not to come across too rigid in the interview. It is often beneficial to remind them that you are not the Police or a social worker.
- Be clear and open at the start regarding your role and what the interview is about; how information will be passed on and shared, and assure them about confidentiality.
- Some young people choose to talk about things that may seem irrelevant at first, however anything a young person says can be added to the voice of the child; and often has some relevance to the missing episode, so listen to everything they talk about.
- Try not to let taking notes become a barrier; often young people can be put off by professionals writing down everything they share.
- Always try and engage the young person prior to the arranged IRI where possible, and keep them as involved as possible in arranging a suitable time and place.
- Empathy; demonstrate to them that you understand why they might feel the way they do.
- Roll with resistance; if they don't want to talk about something in particular, move on. Getting stuck on one point can end the interview early.
- Open questions; this will encourage the young person to me more broad with their answers.
- Active listening; show the young person you are listening to them.

Missing episode

- Where were they? Try and get exact addresses if possible.
- How did they get there?
- Who did they spend time with? How do they know these people? How old are they? Were they aware the young person was missing? Try and get full names.
- How did they afford anything they bought? Food, bus tickets, taxi fares, cigarettes, drugs etc.
- What made them decide to come back? How was their return reacted too?
- What made them decide to leave in the first place? Was it planned? Did they tell anyone? Did they know where they were going?
- Who were they in contact with during the missing episode? why?
- Did they feel safe? Why/why not?
- What stopped them from coming home sooner?

Voice of the child

- How is the young person feeling?
- Are they in education/training/employment? How do they feel about this?
- How is home life?
- Who can they trust/talk to?
- What are their hobbies?

Advice and guidance

- Get the young person to identify any risks associated with their missing episode. Support them in identifying any further ones they have not mentioned.
- Don't tell the young person what to do; help and guide them to reach a solution for themselves.
- Help them to identify what can be done to reduce these risks in the future.
- Help them to identify trusted adults they can talk to.
- Have an open discussion with them regarding what they think could change in order to prevent them from going missing in the future. Who could help them with this?