

## **Children Missing from Care framework webinar – reflections from attendees**

To help reduce a child's likelihood of going missing and enable placement stability, carers, the local authority, and partner agencies should adopt a coordinated, consistent, child centred and restorative approach to working with children. The [Children Missing from Care framework](#) seeks to find the balance between reporting vulnerable children as missing when they are not where they are expected to be and avoiding police contact when the child is just late home, testing the boundaries, or is engaging in safe activities but has just failed to inform their carer where they are.

Led by The Fostering Network, the [Children Missing from Care webinar](#) included fostering services, foster carers and other professionals and presented the framework for all to follow in the event of a child or young person who is late home, or who in fact goes missing. Presented by Chief Inspector Alan Rhees-Cooper along with our colleagues from the working group Steve Challinor, [The Keys Group](#), and Holly Pitt, [Missing People](#), he explained the framework in detail including a description of what to consider when a child goes missing and the criteria to assess the level of intervention required such as knowledge of the child, antecedent behaviours, trigger incidents and out of character behaviours.

Case examples were shared with explanations as to how the model applied in each scenario followed by a panel question and answer session.

Attendees to the webinar were asked four questions in respect of their reflections on the framework:

### **Question 1. how will the framework help and support children and young people?**

Attendees responded to the question with the view on how the framework could support the building of trusting relationships between young people, their carers and the police, and in reducing the risk of young people feeling stigmatised and criminalised. It was felt that this would be supported by the clear framework and structure for carers and professionals to follow, balancing the need for safeguarding whilst ensuring young people are not treated differently to their peers.

*"It will protect them [children and young people] by making the reporting processes clearer, minimising unnecessary negative contact, and maximise required responses."*

*“It will stop the stigma between police and young people and allow more trust and openness between themselves and their carers.”*

However, attendees felt that confidence in it being successful depended on everyone around the child and young person being aware of and following the framework.

*“I think empowering carers will be beneficial, but it is crucial that any decision made is with support from social workers/council”.*

## **Question 2: What difference will it make for foster carers?**

Attendees responded reflecting on the fact that in gaining a greater understanding of the levels of intervention and having a clear framework of when to and not to report a child or young person missing would provide them with more confidence and a sense of empowerment in making the right decision. In addition, they felt that the framework would promote the opportunity to work collaboratively with other professionals involved.

*“Give them [foster carers] a sense of power when they know the child best. Allow them to feel heard as part of the process also when working for an agency our on call worker can work alongside them.”*

*“To work collaboratively with other professionals and feel supported, not having to feel isolated in decisions.”*

However, there was a concern that in order to make the right decision foster carers would need to have full information about the children and young people they care for, and support and confidence in their decision making from other professionals involved.

*“I think it will definitely put more responsibility on them (foster carers). However, if all professionals are aware of this way of working and it is supported, it could work better.”*

*“We could give reassurance to our carers that they should make decisions with our support and the outcome is not what will be criticised. They will also know that they should make their own judgements based on the child and not a strict reporting system.”*

## **Question 3: How will it improve multi agency working?**

Attendees responded reflecting on the fact that this framework will support more collaborative working between professionals when a child goes missing. It will promote a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities, improve information sharing and risk assessments.

*“Hopefully will get all agencies on the same page so we are working to the same framework, as often we are all very different in how and when we thought it was appropriate to report.”*

*“Accountability is clear when using this framework – that all agencies need to play a key role.”*

*“Everyone working from the same model so will support safety plans.”*

#### **Question 4: What are the next steps to enable it to be successful?**

Attendees responded reflecting on the need for the outcome of the framework pilot and sharing learning from this widely. Ideas included a national launch and further webinars, the development of protocols and practice guidance. The responses highlighted the importance of sharing the framework widely, with foster carers, social workers, fostering services and senior managers and other professionals supported by training. Additionally, that the framework and its outcomes should be regularly reviewed. There was also a recognition that Ofsted would need to be aware of and understand the framework and how agencies used it to support children and young people.

*“Rolling out training and support for carers, SSWs, CSWs and managers.”*

*“Further webinars, roll out to partnership agencies, wider publication in the media.”*

*“Trial run, drill down into feedback, change and evolve going forward feedback from carers and young people alike.”*

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#### **More from The Fostering Network**

**Practice Support:** The Fostering Network offers practice support throughout the UK. In England, the practice support team comprises regional consultants who provide a range of services to members of The Fostering Network including practice advice, information, forums, support and guidance. If you would like further information about the practice support team in England or practice support across the UK and what we can do to support you, please contact Sarah McEnhill, Head of Practice:

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**Advice and information:** we offer [advice and information](#) to anyone interested in or involved in fostering in all four nations of the UK, including a Members' Helpline for all members of The Fostering Network.