



# West Sussex Safeguarding Children Board

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Board Response to Harrow Serious Case  
Review – Child R

**February 2015**

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Members of West Sussex Safeguarding Children Board (WSSCB) Serious Case Review Sub- group (on behalf of the WSSCB) met on 2 February 2015 to review the full report from Harrow Safeguarding Children Board. West Sussex Safeguarding Children Board and Sussex Police fully accepted Recommendation 18 as outlined in Chapter 2 of the Report.
- 1.2 West Sussex Safeguarding Children Board has implemented an action plan based on the recommendation relating to West Sussex which include actions already taken to date as a result of learning and other actions required to address the learning by all agencies in West Sussex. This action plan and updates have been shared with Harrow Safeguarding Children Board.

## **Recommendations**

### **2. Recommendation 18**

- 2.1 *Sussex Police should review its risk assessment framework for missing and absent children to ensure that call handlers are able to obtain information about the severity of risk factors and are not limited to a checklist.*

### **2.2 WSSCB View:**

- 2.21 The WSSCB agree that all risk assessments of children who leave care placements without authorisation will properly reflect their needs.

### **2.3 Actions taken/or planned in response to the questions posed to WSSCB by the Harrow Serious Case Review Team:**

- 2.31 Sussex Police will train all call handlers on policy, guidance and understanding risk factors relation to missing and absent children in order to make an informed assessment and decision as to action to take.
- 2.32 Sussex Police are reviewing their IT systems (Niche and Compact) to ensure that all information required by call handlers is available and information is not missing.
- 2.33 West Sussex Children's Social Care, Access to Resource Team and Sussex Police are reviewing how information regarding children placed in WSCC under Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations is shared by other local authorities with required agencies to ensure information is passed on to enable a thorough risk assessment to be completed.

- 2.34 Sussex Police have piloted a Missing Persons Team which has been scrutinised by the WSSCB.
- 2.35 The team has been successful in **reducing the time periods** from when a person is reported missing to them being located. This has reduced from an average of 55 hours a year ago to 30 hours now. Additionally some 292 return interviews have been completed by Barnardos in the period since the MPT has been in operation. These interviews have helped to provide a richer picture of what happens when young people go missing and enables the MPT to begin to put disruptive measures in place to reduce such episodes in the case of some young people. The panel heard that there has been a 14% reduction in 'missing person' episodes and a 15% reduction in 'absent person' episodes (for example, young people who go absent from residential or their own family homes).

Every child/young person who goes missing is **risk assessed** in terms of CSE. Barnardos undertake 1:1 interviews and are commissioned to undertake the interview within 24 hours. Every Looked After Child who is assessed as 'RED' (at risk) is assigned a Special Point of Contact (SPOC) who may be a Police Officer or a Social Worker. Each of the 33 Residential Homes in the County has a SPOC within the MPT. A special PIER action plan (Prevention Intelligence Investigative Enforcement Reinforcement Plan) is created for the top ten children who go missing. This is an arrangement which has been introduced since the establishment of the MPT.

The MPT has created considerable 'value added' in dealing with the task of managing missing children and young people within the County and also in developing a crucial link with managing the risks of child sexual exploitation.