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ICHA, IFA & ACPO Framework

Children Missing from Care

Rachael Courage



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Learning Objectives

- **why** young people go missing
- **what** we can do to pre-empt, intervene and learn from missing incidents
- **young people's** perspectives on what would help
- **identify** risks associated with going missing
- **understand** a contextual safeguarding approach
- **use** the levels of intervention model before, during and after missing episodes.

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Learning agreement

- Time keeping
- Confidentiality
- Respect
- One person to talk at a time
- Mobiles off
- We model partnership behaviours
- Share knowledge and expertise
- Challenge jargon that stops us understanding each other

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Looked after young people go missing more...

- **One in ten** young people go missing from care, usually multiple times. This is twenty times the national average
- They often experience **significant harm**
- They are **over-reported to the Police**
- This course aims to improve these experiences.

1 in 10

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Decision Making on when to call the Police

“ Young people **do not want the police to automatically** be contacted if they are not where they are supposed to be. They want decisions around contacting the police to be made based on their **own unique situation**, including any **risks** and the **circumstances** at that time. The police should **not be contacted as a disciplinary measure**. However, it is **vital** that they are contacted when a child is **at risk** of coming to harm.”

- Children's Views on being Reported Missing from Care, Missing People (2021)

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They might be drunk or taking drugs, and not want to go home looking off their face or drunk. They could be selling drugs and might have to owe money to a drug dealer. They might get a battering because of what they are involved in.”

*If they are f**ked up, like with Mental Health or stuff, or they say they are going to kill themselves then you got to report them straight away.*

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Risks with Premature Police Intervention

"Remember being in care isn't like being a normal teenager, so don't expect us to be normal. Try and understand our reasons, sometimes you need to leave us alone, you need to listen to what we say when we aren't happy and don't blame us for not being able to cope. Don't threaten my placement because I go missing."

"Calling police is not giving young people a chance to cool off. Keep lines of communication open and do best to find them yourself"

"Try to speak with them or friends, don't make it a big issue."

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How to Identify Risk

Antecedent Behaviour

Trigger Incidents

Out of Character Behaviour

Post Incident Behaviour

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Why Do Young People Go Missing?

- We're building up a picture of your answers – it is all anonymous
- Open the camera on your phone and hold over this QR code– a link should pop up to click
- If it won't open visit **www.menti.com** and use the code **7742 0114**



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Children Missing from Care Framework

“To keep children safe, agencies and professionals need to be **proactive** to help prevent missing episodes. **Reporting** a child as missing to the police does not resolve the **reasons** or reduce the **recurrence** as to why a child was not where they were expected to be. **Every effort should be made to prevent a child from going missing in the first place.**”



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Philomena protocol

- Over half of safeguarding partnerships now use this. If your local area does not have the protocol in place, raise this with your local safeguarding children partnership
- Durham police initiative which reduced missing person cases by 36%
- Patron saint of babies, infants and youths
- Complete Part 1 when young person in your care
- Complete Part 2 if you need to contact the Police
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Getting the Rules Right

“Don't make rules they can't keep to curfews too early, rules too strict, can't see friends, have them over etc. In semi [Semi independent living] we are supposed to look after ourselves, be independent, but **we can't make our own decisions** about who comes and stays and how long we go out, **how does that make sense?**”

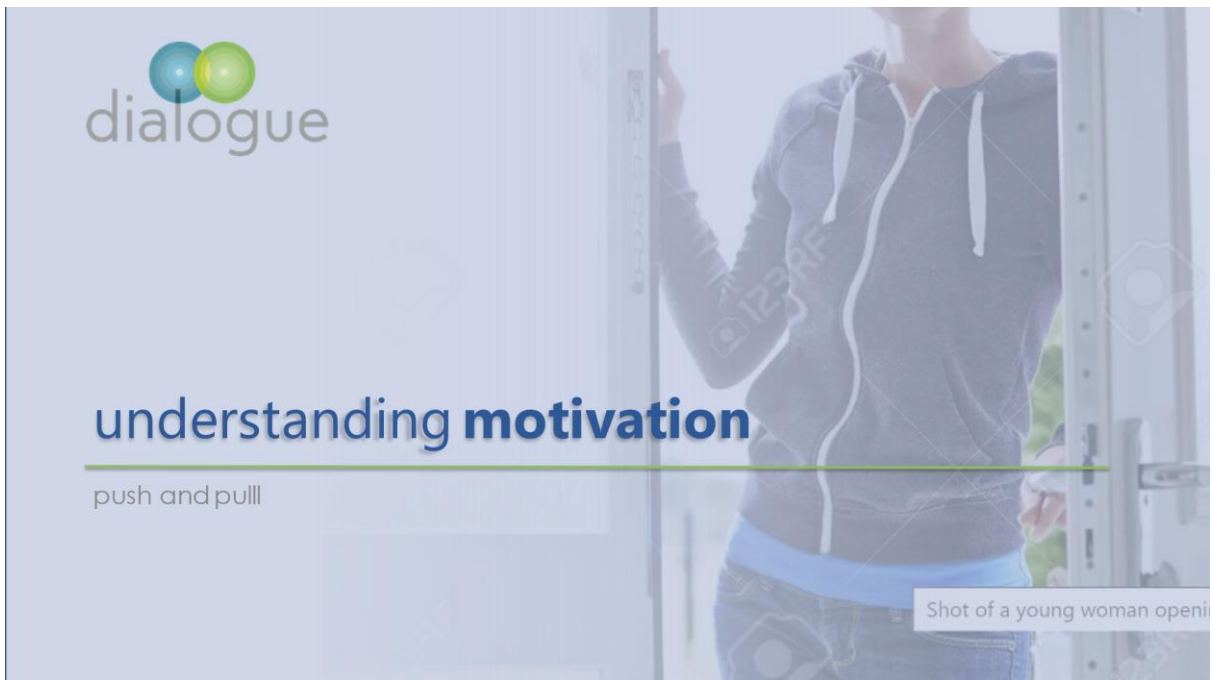
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Making a Judgement

“It depends on the kid as to when the police should be called. Every kid is different.”



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dialogue

understanding **motivation**

push and pull

Shot of a young woman opening

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Not a return to 'Absent'

- Historically young people were considered **absent** not 'missing'
- police decided there was 'no apparent risk'
- Young people "ended up **falling through the safety net**, exploited by adults for sex or criminal activity such as running drugs across county lines."

• All Party Parliamentary Group 2016

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Levels of intervention

No immediate intervention

You are not concerned about the child's safety based on the information you know about them and the circumstances of this incident.

Carer intervention

Police intervention

The carer decides to wait for the child to return of their own accord.

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Levels of intervention

No immediate intervention

Some concerns & want to ensure they are okay, but don't have any reason to believe they are going to come to harm.

Carer intervention

Carer considers information in the child's plan & takes steps to locate them & check safe. The child is not where they are expected to be. Carer accepts responsibility for contacting and/or searching for the child to ensure their safety and return. The circumstances and level of concern do not justify police intervention at the time.

Police intervention

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Levels of intervention

No immediate intervention

You are worried about the child and have been unable to contact them or, if you have contacted them, don't think they are safe.

Carer intervention

There are serious concerns about the child's safety. The police have a duty to assist.

Police intervention

If you're unsure, use the document [*National Police Chiefs' Council When to Call the Police*](#)

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Levels of Intervention Model

Alice is 13 and has lived with foster carers for six months. She has previously self-harmed but has not done so since being placed with her foster carers.

- She catches a bus home from school and normally arrives home at 1540 hours. The buses run every half hour. On this occasion, she does not arrive home at 1540 hours as expected.
- The carer tries to call her on her mobile phone, but her mobile phone is turned off. There have been no recent incidents involving Child A to increase concern.
- $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour later she's still not home.
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Levels of Intervention Model

Bren is a 15 year old looked after child identified as at risk of County Lines. In previous missing episodes he has been gone for several days.

- At 1715 hours, he has an argument and walks out in a temper. From out of the window you can see him sitting on a bench up the road.
- When you look again he is no longer on the bench.
- He answers his phone saying he's gone for a walk and will be back in half an hour.

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Levels of Intervention Model

Charley is a looked after child. They are 17 years of age and live in supported accommodation. They have been reported missing four times during the last month when they've not returned overnight. On every occasion, they have been found at their 18 year old girlfriend's address. This address is considered safe.

- At 2300 hours, he has not returned.
- Staff try to call him but he is not answering his mobile phone, but this is not unusual.

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Levels of Intervention Model

Daz is a 15 year old girl at risk of exploitation

- At 1800 hours, the carer allows her to go out to meet her friends but asks her to return by 2000 hours.
- Another member of staff passes Daz at 1920 hours on her way to work. She is with four other young people of the same age stood on the green talking.
- At 2030 hours, she has not returned so the carer calls her on her mobile phone. The girl informs her that she will return home later but refuses to say where she is. The carer can hear other children laughing in the background. The girl ends the call and then refuses to answer her mobile

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Levels of Intervention Model

Eduardo is a 14 year old boy identified as at risk of CSE. He obtains permission to go out to meet his age appropriate girlfriend in the park.

He leaves at 1630 hours and is told to return by 2000 hours. At 1645 hours, another resident returns to the care home and states he has just seen the boy get into a car with an unknown adult. The other resident believes the male is a drug dealer.

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Levels of Intervention Model

Florrie is a 16 year old girl identified as at risk of CSE.

A member of staff at the care home observes her put on makeup and be active on her mobile phone. This has previously been identified as antecedent behaviour to her going to meet those who exploit her. The carer informs her that she is not allowed to go out. Half an hour later, the girl manages to leave when the care staff are distracted.

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Levels of Intervention Model

- **Tania is a 15 yr old girl identified as being at risk of CSE.**

After school she calls staff on her mobile, and says she wants to go to the park with her friends. She sounds cheerful. Staff know these friends and agree with her she'll be back by 5pm.

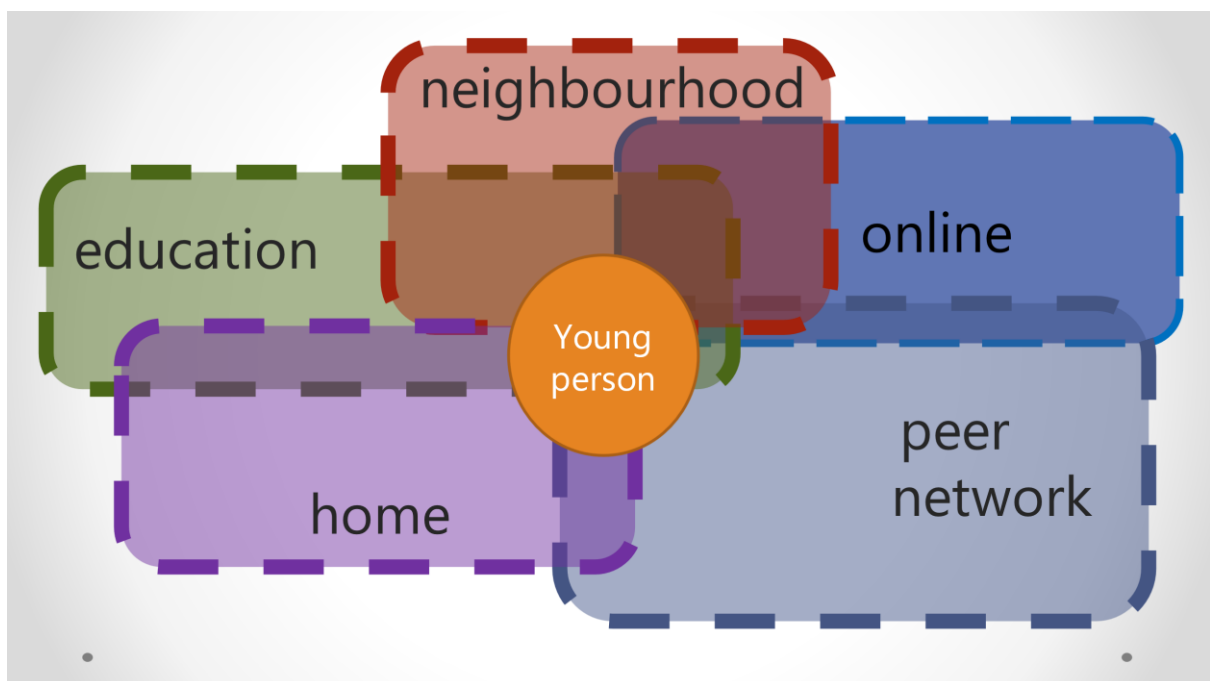
At 4.40pm Tania comes in. She won't look staff in the eye or reply, and goes straight to her room and locks the door. This is out of character.

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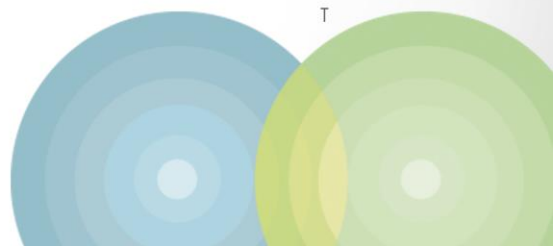


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Think of a location of concern in your area, where young people go and you think is unsafe.

Why is it unsafe? What are you worried about? What goes on there? At what times? How many young people are at risk?



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who are our safeguarding partners?

think about your local agencies

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dialogue

dynamic risk assessment

prevention, response, reflection

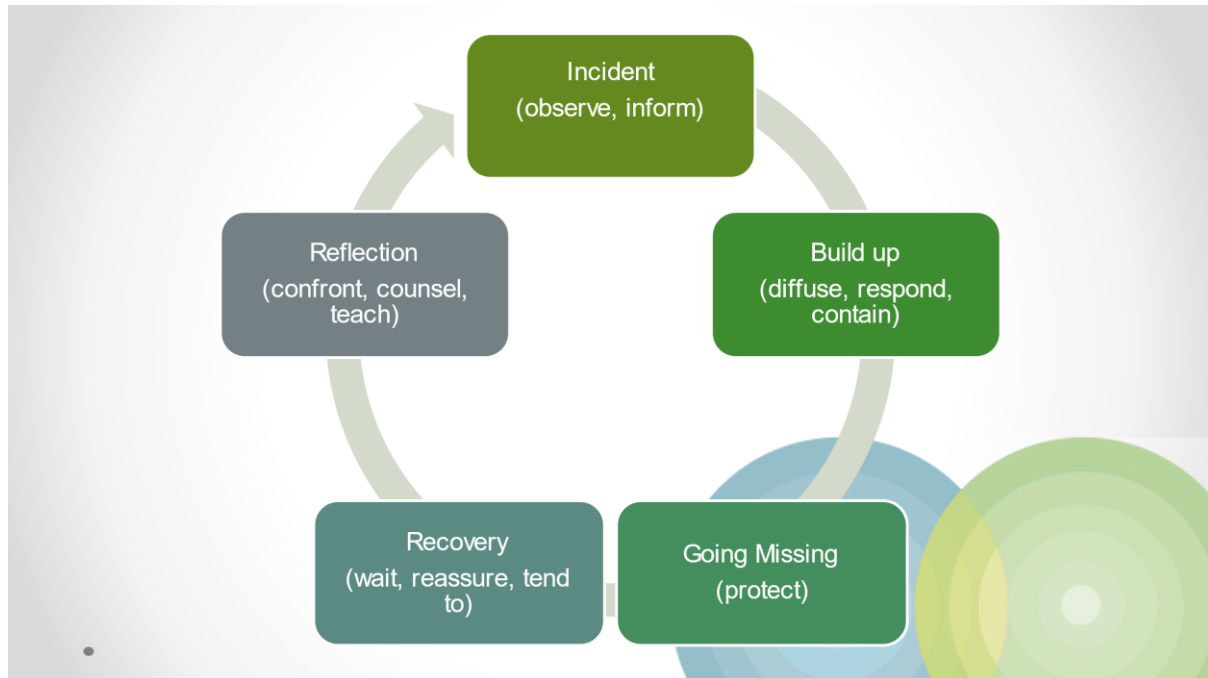
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Defining dynamic risk assessment

continuous assessment of risk in the **rapidly changing circumstances** of an **operational incident**, in order to implement the **control measures necessary** to ensure an **acceptable level of safety**



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Steps when a young person returns...

- Warm welcome, attend to physical needs
- Ensure all agencies are advised and prevention and return home interviews arranged.
- Preserve any evidence if you suspect a crime
- Police prevention interview/discussion, aimed at ~~going~~ assessing vulnerability, establish whether they have been harmed, gather information in case they go missing again, and inform strategic and disruptive activity
- Independent Return Interview/ discussion gives a safe space to talk about worries and fears. Learning opportunity.
- All information gathered should feed into a reflective process to support preventing and managing any future missing episodes and into young person's risk assessment

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how might this change
your practice?

group discussion