

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE MISSING AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION RISK ASSESSMENT CONFERENCE (M-SERAC)

OPERATING PROTOCOL January 2016

1 Introduction

The aim of this protocol is to outline the purpose and operational procedures for the countywide Missing and Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Conference (M-SERAC).

M-SERAC is a multi-agency risk management meeting that seeks to ensure that children living in Buckinghamshire are effectively safeguarded and protected from harm in cases where:

- They are or might be victims of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
- They are high risk missing children or children who regularly go missing

The M-SERAC was born out of the Multi Agency Risk Management Meeting (MARMM) which focused just on missing children. However, as many of the children at risk of CSE were identified as being regular missing persons it was agreed that there should be a single meeting covering both missing and CSE.

All reference to child or children in this document refers to any person under the age of eighteen years.

2 Definitions

Nationally Agreed Definition of CSE:

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.¹

Nationally Agreed Definition of Regular and High Risk Missing Persons

High Risk: The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the subject is in danger through their own vulnerability; or may have been the victim of a serious crime; or the risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for

¹ Working Together 2015

believing that the public is in danger. (*TVP Standard Operating Procedure*, 2015 derived from *ACPO Missing Persons Policy*, 2013)

Repeat Missing Person: Someone who is reported missing three times or more in a ninety day period. (*TVP Standard Operating Procedure*, 2015 derived from *ACPO Missing Persons Policy*, 2013)

3 The need for a Multi-Agency Approach

When CSE is identified or young people go missing, it is recognised that no one partner agency holds all the information required to effectively assess the needs or fully assess the risk of serious harm to children. In the majority of cases the support of more than one agency is required to ensure the long term safety and support of children.

An M-SERAC is a meeting in which partner agencies come together to share information and set actions to address the potential or recognized risk to a child who has been or could become subject to sexual exploitation or who is a 'high risk' or 'repeat' missing person. This meeting is intended to share information, provide early intervention, reduce the risk to the child and consider how harmful activities can be disrupted.

Once a month a number of agencies meet to discuss a case list of children deemed to be at risk of CSE or a high risk / repeat missing person. The list for discussion is based on the referrals to Thames Valley Police and Children's Social Services – see the referral diagram on p5.

Information is shared between the agencies and actions set with the intention of reducing the risk to children. M-SERAC does not replace the provisions of Section 17 (Child in Need) or 47 (Child in need of protection) of the Children Act. It compliments statutory processes by helping to ensure that the bigger picture is considered, that action to safeguard is being completed and the appropriate multi-agency response is in place.

4 Governance and Reporting Arrangements

For each case that is discussed through M-SERAC the normal case management procedures apply. Professionals attending SERAC also retain their organisational lines of accountability for their work.

Where there is professional disagreement around an individual case that is discussed at M-SERAC, then the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) Escalation, Challenge and Conflict Resolution Procedure should be followed: www.bucks-lscb.org.uk/bscb-procedures/

The BSCB is a statutory partnership which is responsible for:

- Coordinating what organisations do to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.

- Ensuring these arrangements are effective

As part of its statutory role, the BSCB has a duty, set out in Working Together 2015, to make an annual appraisal of the effectiveness of our local approach to tackling CSE. In addition, the BSCB holds the strategic lead for CSE within Buckinghamshire.

Given that M-SERAC is a key component to our approach to tackling CSE in Buckinghamshire, both chairs will sit on the BSCB CSE Subgroup and M-SERAC will be a standing agenda item on the Sub Group agenda.

M-SERAC will provide the CSE Sub Group with anonymised quarterly performance data and may provide other information that is relevant to the BSCB in the capacity outlined above. This could be, for example, emerging trends or patterns, issues relating to local policies and procedures or any other concerns that have emerged through M-SERAC that require a multi-agency response. The CSE Sub Group reports directly to the BSCB. Information provided to the CSE Sub Group may be shared with the BSCB as part of management reports, to share good practice or to escalate any concerns or risks.

The information provided by M-SERAC will be used to help the BSCB make an assessment of how well partners are safeguarding children from harm. Although the BSCB is not operational and does not have the power to direct organisations, the BSCB can make recommendations where improvements in practice are required.

5 Membership and Attendance.

M-SERAC is jointly chaired by a senior manager from Children's Social Care (CSC) and a senior member of the Thames Valley Police Child Abuse Investigation Unit.

It will be an invitation only meeting due to the sensitive and private information that is shared by agencies in relation to named children. Regular participants include:

- Police Missing Persons Coordinator
- Representatives from Children in Care teams CSC
- Education Safeguarding Advisory Service (ESAS)
- Children and Teenagers Community Help (CATCH)
- RUSafe? (Barnardos)
- Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust
- Child and Adolescence Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- Young Addaction
- Youth Offending Service
- Exclusions Team (Buckinghamshire County Council)
- Outreach Service for Children
- Family Resilience Service (Buckinghamshire County Council)
- Connexions
- Representatives from residential care homes
- Swan Team

Each of these agencies should identify a person who has an understanding of CSE as their **Designated M-SERAC Officer**. This person needs to be of sufficient standing in their organisation to be able to make decisions in relation to the deployment of resources in specific cases at an operational level.

A deputy should also be identified so that the agency may still be represented at M-SERAC meetings if the Designated M-SERAC Officer is unable to attend. The Missing Persons Coordinator should be informed if a deputy is attending or if it is not possible for anyone else from the agency to attend.

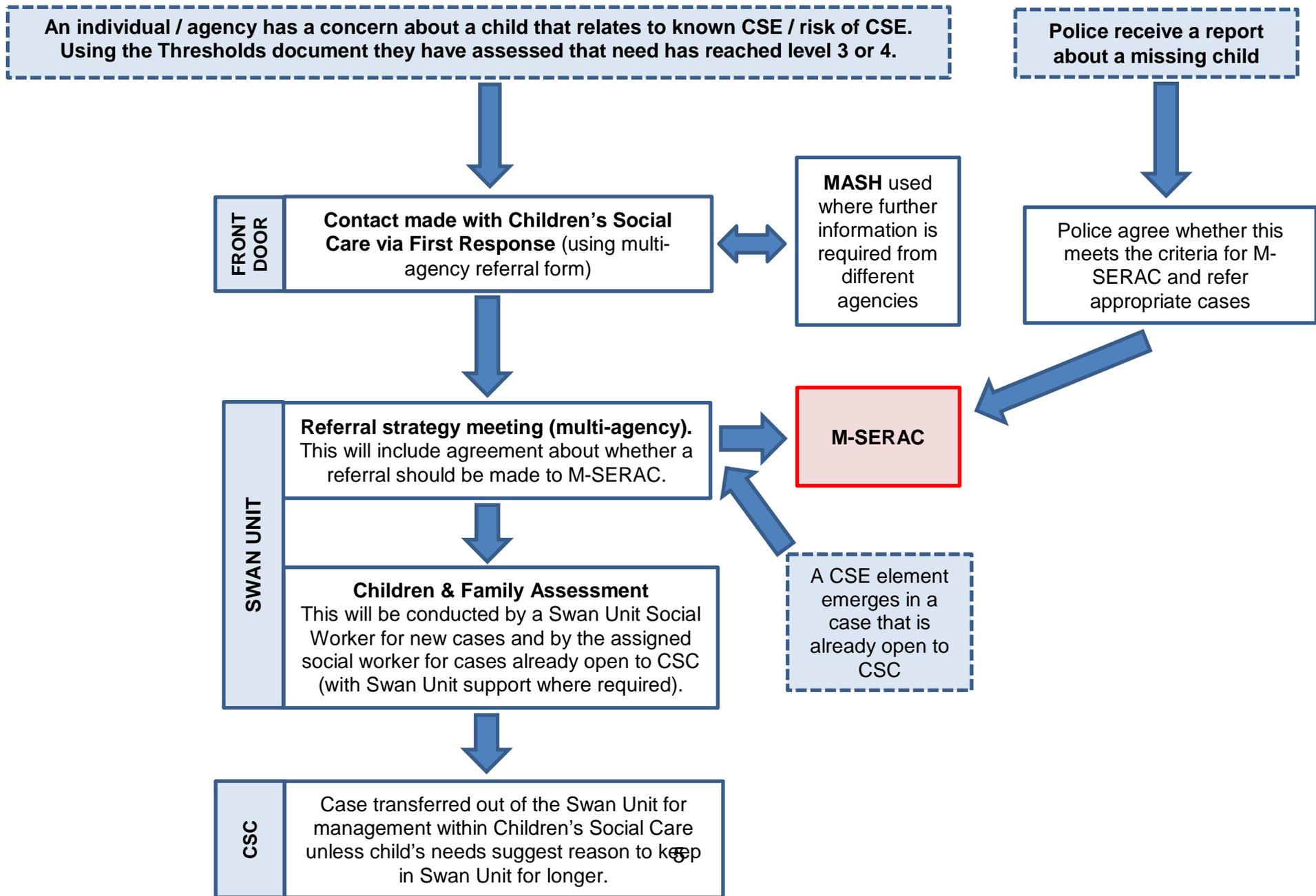
When it is deemed appropriate for other agencies/areas to attend or for variation in attendance, this will be agreed between the co-chairs of M- SERAC

6 M-SERAC Referral Process

The diagram on the next page indicates the referral process for M-SERAC.

- Missing children will be reported to Thames Valley Police who will agree whether the case meets the referral criteria for SERAC.
- Where there is a concern about CSE, referral to M-SERAC will be made at the point where the case is discussed at the Referral strategy meeting in the Swan Unit.

M-SERAC Referral Process



There is a referral form (see appendix 1) for any referral to M-SERAC. The referral must be submitted to the Thames Valley Police 'Missing Persons Coordinator' at least **fourteen days** before the next M-SERAC meeting to allow time for the details to be entered onto the agenda, distributed to partner agencies and research by each agency to be completed. M-SERAC meetings will be held monthly on the **third Wednesday** of each month.

Referral forms will be returned if they contain insufficient details. This may result in a delay in a child being discussed at M-SERAC and every effort should be made to supply all relevant and available information. The referral will not be refused by the Missing Persons Coordinator, it will simply be returned with a request for clarification or further information. There will be no gatekeeping by the Police and all cases referred will be discussed.

7 Recording Information

All relevant details from the referral form will be recorded by the Missing Persons Coordinator on a spreadsheet that will be their responsibility to maintain. This spreadsheet will be used to provide quarterly performance information to the BSCB CSE Sub Group, and all agencies involved in M-SERAC. This performance information will not include any personal information and may be considered for wider distribution as required.

8 Distribution of Case Details

The M-SERAC agenda will be circulated by secure email **seven days** prior to the meeting by the Missing Persons Coordinator to the Designated M-SERAC Officers (see Appendix 3) and their deputies so that all agencies are provided with an opportunity to complete their research. On receipt of the agenda, Designated M-SERAC Officers will establish whether any relevant information is held on the cases concerned within their own agency. It is essential that the Designated M-SERAC Officers are prepared to deliver all relevant information at the meeting.

Agencies should not wait until the M-SERAC meeting before taking action to address a child's needs and begin reducing risk. Prior to the meeting work will commence within a number of agencies to address issues of safety and support. There may also be a need for immediate safeguarding actions in some cases and a strategy meeting will be initiated as usual. This is particularly the case in relation to strategy meetings and other statutory obligations, the M-SERAC is designed to augment these not replace them.

9 The M-SERAC Meeting

Each meeting will begin with members signing the confidentiality agreement which will be read out by one of the Co-Chairs (See Appendix 2). Minutes will be taken by Administration Support for Buckinghamshire Children's Social Care and circulated to those attending within 7 days of the meeting.

Within the M-SERAC meeting the cases will be discussed and actions set with a view to reducing the risk to specific children or to address a lack of provision. CSE trends regarding behaviour or locations are also provided to assist in identification of those at risk

of CSE. Should more general actions be identified as required to protect the wider population these will be referred to the CSE Sub Group unless urgent when they may be more appropriate for a referral to Police, Children's Social Care or other agency.

For cases that are open to M-SERAC, the allocated Social Worker will be asked to provide an update on the case via the form at appendix 4.

If there is information that is felt to be relevant to another Group, for example GMAP (Gang related activity), actions will be set to ensure the smooth transfer of information within overlapping spheres of interest and responsibility. One Designated M-SERAC member will also be a member of the G-MAP group to ensure information sharing between the two groups.

Children who are living in Buckinghamshire but are managed by a different Local Authority will be discussed at M-SERAC if concerns of CSE are apparent. A letter stating that the child has been discussed will be sent notifying the Local Authority that the meeting has taken place. For ongoing cases, a Swan Unit Social Worker will request a case update for M-SERAC from the other Local Authority via the form at appendix 4.

No case should last longer than 10 minutes. During this time each agency will produce relevant information they have regarding a particular case. Should extended discussion of a particular case be required the M-SERAC Chair may direct that a separate professionals meeting or Child Protection meeting is appropriate.

10 Completion of Actions.

There is an expectation that the Designated M-SERAC Officer will accept actions on behalf of their organisation, that all actions will be completed and the Missing Persons Coordinator updated by email within **fourteen days** of the meeting. However, some actions may be more urgent and the Chair may set a shorter timescale.

All partner agencies should report progress back to M-SERAC, via the Missing Persons Coordinator, in order to ensure that results are recorded appropriately. The M-SERAC Chair will query any outstanding actions if these have not been completed by the date of the next meeting. It remains however the responsibility of the named agency to ensure that actions are completed in a timely fashion.

Where agencies are unable to complete any actions they should in the first instance notify the M-SERAC Chair with a short explanation of why the action cannot be completed. The M-SERAC Chair will then work with the agency concerned to identify a solution consistent with the principles of the M-SERAC process. Any conflict or disagreement between the M-SERAC Chair and any agency should be managed using the BSCB Escalation, Challenge and Conflict Resolution Procedure: www.bucks-lscb.org.uk/bscb-procedures/

11 Removal from M-SERAC

A child will be removed from M-SERAC when it has been agreed by the Co-Chairs that the risk of CSE / missing has been addressed as far as is possible in the circumstances and

the risk to the child from CSE is reduced, or the apparent vulnerabilities or behaviour has been investigated and deemed not to be CSE / missing related. It is accepted that many of the children discussed will have other vulnerabilities unconnected to CSE / missing, and M-SERAC will ensure these are being addressed or refer the child to the appropriate authority or person.

A discussion will take place in relation to any objections to removing any specific child from M-SERAC. If disagreement continues then the BSCB Escalation, Challenge and Conflict Resolution Procedure should be used: www.bucks-lscb.org.uk/bscb-procedures/

12 Receiving or Referring Cases.

When a child is referred to M-SERAC from a different area, the Police Missing Persons Coordinator should consider whether a referral to Children's Social Care for a Strategy Meeting or Police is required. Such referrals are unlikely to be on the M-SERAC Referral Form and further contact may be required to ensure all necessary information is recorded. Consideration should be given to inviting the child's Social Worker or another appropriate professional from that area to attend the meeting.

Where Buckinghamshire children are placed out of county it may be necessary to pass information on the equivalent of an M-SERAC meeting in another authority. In such cases, the Police Missing Persons Coordinator should seek confirmation of receipt from Coordinator within the other authority and brief them verbally if necessary. All referrals to other areas should be recorded including the name and designation of the person to whom they have been referred.

13 Information Sharing Agreement

All agencies are signed up to the Safeguarding Children Board's Information Sharing protocol ADD LINK. The Children Act 2004, amongst several other regulations, clearly stresses the legal duty and professional responsibility on agencies to share information without consent if needed to protect children. Information shared should be taken to participants' respective agency and recorded appropriately in a secure manner.

14 Appendices

Appendix 1	SERAC Referral Form
Appendix 2	SERAC Confidentiality Statement
Appendix 3	Designated SERAC Officers
Appendix 4	Information Sharing Agreement

Appendix 1: SERAC Referral Form

Multi Agency REFERRAL FORM for Missing & Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Conference (M-SERAC)	
Referring Agency	
Contact Name	
Referring Agency	
Contact Number	
Contact Email.	
Details of child/young person.	
Family Name	
Forename	
Date of Birth	
Gender (M/F)	
Ethnicity	
Disability	
First Language	
Home Address	
Current Location of Different from Home Address	
GP Details	
School Attended	
Allocated Social Worker and contact details.	
Looked After Child? Section 20, 31 etc.	
Person with PR?	

Family Members/ Others in Household.	
Suspect	
Family Name	
Forename	
DOB	
Gender	
Address	
Relationship to child	

Appendix 2: M-SERAC Confidentiality Statement

M-SERAC: AYLESBURY (BUCKS) CONFIDENTIALITY DECLARATION.

Multi – Agency Risk Management Meeting

THE CHAIR OF THE MEETING REMINDS ALL CONCERNED OF THE PROTOCOLS WITHIN THE AGREED SHARING OF INFORMATION DOCUMENT.

INFORMATION DISCUSSED BY THE AGENCY REPRESENTATIVE, WITHIN THE AMBIT OF THIS MEETING IS STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL AND MUST NOT BE DISCLOSED TO THIRD PARTIES WHO HAVE NOT SIGNED UP THE LOCAL INFORMATION SHARING PROTOCOL WITHOUT THE AGREEMENT OF THE PARTNERS OF THE MEETING. IT SHOULD FOCUS ON MISSING AND CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS AND A CLEAR DISTINCTION SHOULD BE MADE BETWEEN FACT AND OPINION.

ALL AGENCIES SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE MINUTES ARE RETAINED IN A CONFIDENTIAL AND APPROPRIATELY RESTRICTED MANNER. THESE MINUTES WILL AIM TO REFLECT THAT ALL INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE DISCUSSED AT THESE MEETINGS SHOULD BE TREATED FAIRLY, WITH RESPECT AND WITHOUT IMPROPER DISCRIMINATION. ALL WORK UNDERTAKEN AT THE MEETINGS WILL BE INFORMED BY A COMMITMENT TO EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND EFFECTIVE PRACTICE ISSUES IN RELATION TO RACE, GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND DISABILITY.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS MEETING IS AS FOLLOWS:

- 1) To share information to increase the safety, health and wellbeing of children.
- 2) To determine whether the young person is at significant risk or poses a risk to the general community or themselves.
- 3) To construct jointly and implement a risk management plan jay provides professional support to all those at risk and that reduces the risk of harm.
- 4) To reduce repeat victimisations
- 5) To improve agency accountability ; and
- 6) Improve support for staff involved in high risk missing cases.

The responsibility to take appropriate actions rests with individual agencies; it is not transferred to M-SERAC. The role M-SERAC is to facilitate, monitor and evaluate effective information sharing to enable appropriate actions to be taken to safeguard young persons.

BY SIGNING THIS DOCUMENT WE AGREE TO ABIDE TO THESE PRINCIPLES.

Appendix 3: Designated SERAC Officers

ORGANISATION	NAME	POSITION	SIGNATURE
Child Social Care (Co-Chair)			
Thames Valley Police (Co-Chair)			
Police Missing Persons Coordinator			
Education			
Bucks Healthcare Trust			
Youth Offending Service			
Housing			
RU Safe Barnardos			
residential care homes			
Young Addaction			
Family Resilience Service			
Outreach Service for Children			
Child and Adolescent Mental health Services			

Appendix 4: Social Worker Feedback Form

Social Workers Case Update form for M-SERAC

Please note that this is not the M-SERAC referral form – this is the form for you to use to provide an update on a case that the Panel are already aware of. The M-SERAC panel meets monthly to discuss high risk cases where young people regularly go missing and/ or are at significant risk of CSE. You do not need to provide the whole case history, just enough information to evidence how the child is being safeguarded at this time. Please use bullet points where possible

Date of M-SERAC meeting	
Name of person providing update and team e.g. FRT/ CIN? CIC	
Name of Young Person and ICS number (if known)	
Is this young person being referred due to their missing episodes OR their CSE risk?	
Case status e.g. C&F assessment/ CIN/ CLA/CP	
If this is a CLA, what is the long-term care plan? E.g. reunification/ LT care	
Legal Status e.g. none/ S20/ EPO/ICO/FCO	
Is another Local Authority involved and if so, which one?	
Does the Young Person have a learning difficulty or disability? This includes ASD, Asperger's and similar.	
Has there been a Hard to Reach Meeting and if so, when?	

What has happened since this case was last discussed at M-SERAC?

What are the concerns?

What are the risks?

What are the details of the perpetrator/s?

What safety measures are in place?

Is there a criminal history?

What other agencies are involved?