No Place at Home

Risks facing children and young people who go missing from out of area placements

The final report on the Inquiry into children and young people who go missing from out of area placements

September 2019

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Foreword

Taking a child into care is meant to keep them safe and make things better.

However, our inquiry heard evidence that when children are placed outside their home area, the risks they face escalate.

These ‘sent away’ children become magnets for paedophiles and ‘County Lines’ drugs gangs, who find them easier to exploit because they are isolated from family, friends and social workers.

Local authorities are unwittingly becoming recruiting sergeants for ‘County Lines’ gangs by placing so many children far away from home.

Councils may also be inadvertently opening up new ‘County Lines’ operations because relocating children, who have been groomed to sell heroin and crack cocaine, can create opportunities for criminals to expand their reach into rural parts of the country.

Over 70 per cent of the 41 police forces that provided evidence to our inquiry stated that placing children out of area increases their risk of exploitation and often results in them being coerced into going missing.

The numbers of out of area placements have soared, despite a government pledge to clampdown on them. Two thirds of all children in children’s homes now live out of area - sometimes more than 100 miles away.

Record numbers are going missing. Many run home because they are so unhappy. Others are enticed to go missing by people seeking to exploit them. They are being traumatised and damaged and their lives disrupted.

It is national scandal that already vulnerable children are suffering additional trauma because local authorities – the very people tasked with keeping them safe – are sending them away.

Looked after children told of their sadness when their lives were disrupted. One boy tried to hang himself on Christmas Day.

Children said they lost contact with family and friends and were often in shock when they were uprooted and moved on the actual day they were told. Education was disrupted and many regress after going back to the bottom of the queue for mental health services.

The children explained how being sent away made them go missing, trying to get back to familiar surroundings. One girl walked 10 miles home. Others went missing because they were groomed by adults or as a result of meeting other young people in those placements who were also at risk.

Sadly, their accounts show that a child’s wishes and feelings are very seldom central to how decisions are made about out of area placements.

Significantly, our report shines a light on the frightening twilight world of unregulated semi-independent homes for older children, aged 16 plus.

The vast majority of police forces expressed concern about the increase in the numbers of children living in these establishments and the risks they face. They are 'off radar' and not subject to Ofsted inspections, unlike children's homes for under 16s.

Police said very high numbers are going missing from this sort of accommodation and the young people become particularly easy targets for those wishing to exploit them for sex or to run drugs. Criminals are sometimes housed in the same accommodation.

The report concludes that children are often placed out of their home area in children's homes and semi-independent accommodation not because it is in their best interests but because there are no local placements available. Out of area placements are driven by market. There are not sufficient numbers of local placements as children's homes are clustered in three main areas of the county, often in cheap housing.

Our APPG first raised concerns about children who go missing from out of area in 2012 and 2016. It is bitterly disappointing that the situation has gone from bad to worse.

We have reached crisis point. Urgent action is now needed and the Government must take responsibility and come up with an Emergency Action Plan to slash the numbers of out of area placements, recognising that they do not keep children safe.

The plan must ensure that there are sufficient places for children to live locally.

It cannot be left to the vagaries of the market. The Emergency plan should provide both the capital and revenue funding to allow local councils to develop local provision, including children's homes and foster families.

The law must also be changed to ensure the shady twilight world of unregulated semi-independent accommodation is regulated and inspected.

Children's wishes, feelings, safety and wellbeing, should be at the centre of decision making.

By placing so many children out of area, councils and government are complicit in exacerbating the trauma of neglected and abused children and of unwittingly providing new recruits for County Lines. This national scandal has to stop.

Ann Coffey, MP

Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Runaway and Missing Children and Adults

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Executive summary

Introduction

Last year over 100,000 children were in care of English local authorities at any point during the year. The number of children who become looked after is growing every year as is the number of children who go missing from their care placements.

Children in care are some of the most vulnerable in society. The main reasons they are in care is due to abuse and neglect experienced in their families. However, more and more adolescents are taken into care due to risks outside their families, such as child criminal exploitation, child sexual exploitation, gangs and trafficking.[1] The risk is heightened when children go missing. Research shows that children in care are three times more likely to run away than other children and many go missing repeatedly. [2]

The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Runaway and Missing Children and Adults has been concerned with the safeguarding of children who go missing from care for quite a while. The APPG Inquiries in 2012 and 2016 presented evidence that children who go missing from care were not receiving the support they need to keep them safe.

The inquiries showed that children's services and police did not have a good understanding of the full picture of children going missing from care. The inquiries showed that there were some serious flaws with how information about children in care was shared at the local level (eg between the police and Ofsted on location of children's homes and between local agencies who had concerns about a young person but could not build a full picture without information from other agencies) and between local authorities (eg the system of notification between local authorities when a child is placed out of area often is not working).

There were also concerns that too many older children were placed in poor quality and unsuitable care placements. This was fuelled by a lack of good accommodation resulting in children being placed *'where there was a bed free, not where would be most suitable'.*[3] One of the biggest concerns highlighted by our earlier inquiries was about the high number of vulnerable children placed outside their local authorities. This suggests serious breaches by local authorities with regard to their 'sufficiency duties' to provide enough accommodation for looked after children within their area and growing concerns and evidence that being placed a long way from family and friends was often a factor in causing young people to run away.

Evidence presented by the APPG's inquiries in 2012 and 2016 contributed to changes to national policies and guidance and local practice:

- Better data collection on children missing from care.
- New requirements on the Directors of Children's Services (DCS) to approve each placement of a looked after child in a 'distant' placement.
- New requirements about risk assessment of the area when a children's home is proposed to open in that area.

[1] The Children's Commissioner, 2019. *Stability Index.* Available at: https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/cco-stability-index-2019.pdf
[2] The Children's Society, 2011. *Make Runaway's Safe.* Available at: https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/tcs/make_runaways_safe_report.pdf
[3] Elise Noblet, The Children's Society, *Oral evidence session* 3, p. 30 2012 Inquiry

- New requirements on local authorities to notify a host local authority when placing a child in that local authority area.

- Information sharing between Ofsted and police about the location of children's homes.

Yet despite the changes to national policy and examples of good practice developed locally the evidence suggests children going missing from care and in particular children going missing from out of area placements remains an issue of great concern.

In March 2019 the APPG launched a new inquiry into children going missing from out of area placements, aiming to explore what further changes are needed to make children in care safer and to explore where practice on the ground is falling short of what is recommended in national guidance.

It is important to note that there are two types of out of area care placements as described by the statutory guidance as part of the Children Act 1989:

- 'Out of area' placements are any placements that are not in the local authorities geographical boundaries. These will be in placements in local authorities which share a geographical boundary with the home local authority.
- 'At a distance' placements are any placement not in the local authority's boundary and not within any of the bordering local authorities.

The inquiry has been interested in the risks associated with both types of placement and therefore throughout this document we will not make a distinction between the two – the term 'out of area placement' will be used throughout. It should be made clear that whilst this inquiry found being placed in an 'out of area' placement can increase the risks facing a young person just as much as in a 'distance' placement, there are some factors such as the having to make longer more complicated journeys home that can make distance placements especially risky.

The Inquiry included an open call for evidence to professionals and organisations working with looked after children in out of area placements and targeted requests for evidence to police and a number of key national agencies (see Appendix 1 for the full list of written submissions received by the Inquiry). In addition freedom of information requests were sent to 153 local authorities in England asking for data about children placed and going missing from out of area placements.

Preliminary findings from written evidence and possible solutions to issues identified were then discussed at two roundtables – one with participation of organisations working directly with young people going missing from out of area placements and another roundtable with representatives from decision making national bodies such as government departments, inspectorates, and policing and local government agencies.

Key findings

The number of children placed outside their local authorities continues to grow.

- At 31 March 2018, 41% (30,670 of 75,420) of looked after children were placed outside of home local authority areas - compared to 35% at March 2012 when the first APPG inquiry into this issue was conducted.
- Fifty nine percent of children placed in secure children's homes, children's homes, and supported accommodation were in out of area placements (5,020 of 8,530) – an increase of 46% since 31 March 2012.
- Two thirds (64%) of children living in children's homes now live out of area, up from 46% in 2012.
- There has been a 77% increase in the numbers of children sent to live in children's homes out of area, from 2,250 in 2012 to 3,990 in 2018.
- Although the placement of children in children's homes outside of area continues to be a concern for the police, host local authorities and other professionals in a child's life, a new area of concern emerged during this inquiry: the increase of children placed out of area in semi-supported accommodation not regulated by Ofsted.
- The exact number of children placed in unregulated accommodation is not reported on at either the National or local level but, based on 42 responses to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests sent to local authorities as part of this inquiry, the number of children placed in unregulated out of area semi-independent accommodation has almost doubled in the last 3 years.

Children and young people continue to be placed in out of area children's homes and semi-independent accommodation due to a lack of suitable local provision and the uneven distribution of children's homes across the country.

- Data published by the DfE shows that in the last five years the number of looked after children placed by local authorities in their own provision within their own boundaries has remained almost static, despite the growing number of children in care. At 31 March 2018, 29,810 children were placed by local authorities within their own boundaries compared to 28,770 at 31 March 2013.
- Ofsted data shows that in the last 5 years the number of privately owned children's homes has increased, with 75% of all children's homes now being private, whilst those run by local authorities decreased. Children's homes continue to be concentrated in areas with cheaper housing.

Data collection about children who go missing from care has improved and indicates that the number of children going missing from these placements, including missing from out of area placements - continues to increase, as does the frequency of missing episodes.[4]

- Between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018, 11% (11,530) of the children who were looked after at any point during the year went missing. These children went missing from care 70,250 times, an average of 6.1 incidents per child.
- The DfE do not currently publish data on the number of children who go missing from out of area placements but we do know that the number of children reported missing from registered children's homes has more than doubled since 2015 - from 990 to 1,990 in 2018 - compared to a 31% increase from those missing from in area placements.[5]

[4] It is important to note that the DfE classify all data on children missing from care as experimental. The increase in numbers may relate to both how data is collected and reported by local authorities as well as the number of children reported as missing. This is the fourth year this information has been collected in this way, and local authorities have reported some variation in how missing incidents are recorded. As experimental statistics these figures are not directly comparable across years and therefore all comparisons across time presented in this report should be treated with caution. However, this is the only available data on missing children.

[5] Children looked after in children's homes (subject to children's homes regulations) who went missing or away without authorisation during the year ending 31 March by placement location. Years ending 31 March 2016 to 18 http://qna.files.parliament.uk/qna-attachments/1136516/original/272767_Children_looked_after_in_children's_homes_subject_to_children's_homes_regulations_who_were_missing_or_away_without_authorisation_during_the_year_ending_31_March%20(1).pdf

- Forty-one percent of incidents of children missing from children's homes alone relate to children missing from out of area placements.

Factors that make children and young people vulnerable to going missing from out of area placements are not addressed and when they do go missing they are at risk.

- All too often children and young people are not being supported to keep in touch with family and friends after being placed in out of area placements. This is leading to them to go missing, being forced to travel long distances to return home - putting them at risk as they are faced with long distances and costly travel options.
- Seventy one percent of 41 police forces that responded to our information request stated that placing looked after children out of area increases their risk of exploitation, often resulting in them being coerced into going missing.
- These children and young people are less likely to receive a return home interview when they return from their missing episode and when they do the information from the interview is often not shared with the police and other safeguarding partners.
- Police forces are not made aware of vulnerable children placed in care in their areas

Children are not being consulted with or informed before out of area placement moves. This causes additional stress and disruption in their lives increasing their level of vulnerability and can contribute towards why they go missing from out of area placements.

'There should always be a good reason and the young person fully informed. I did not feel fully informed when I was moved out of area. I wasn't totally understanding the reason.' (Young person)

'I think when I moved I should have had someone sit with me and tell me where everything is. I had to find this out for myself.' (Young person)

Key recommendations

1. The Department for Education should develop an Emergency Action Plan to significantly reduce the number of out of area placements. The Government must take responsibility for ensuring that there are sufficient local placements to meet the needs of looked after children. This plan should address the supply and the distribution of children's homes nationally, and the use of unregulated semi-independent provision. It should be backed by funding.

2. The law must be changed to ensure that unregulated semi-independent accommodation for children is regulated and inspected.

3. Every out of area placement decision must be supported by evidence to demonstrate that the decision to place a child at a distance will keep that child safe and will meet their long term needs.

4. A new requirement should be placed on children's services to demonstrate that children and young people have been consulted and informed in advance and supported to prepare for any out of area moves. Contact with family and friends must be supported and planned for.

5. The Department for Education and the Home Office should develop a cross-departmental strategy on tackling child criminal exploitation and County Lines, specifically focusing on the risks to looked after children placed out of area.

Section One – Children and young people in out of area placements

1. Last year 104,100 children were in care of local authorities at any point during the year.[6] During the same time period of those children 11,530 (11% of all children in care) went missing from their care placements once or more.

2. As the APPG inquiries in 2012 and 2016 highlighted, a child going missing from placement is an indicator of risk and sign that things are not going well in their life. There is not enough research into why children go missing from care, but we know that for some children it could be due to them not being happy being in care or not happy with their care placement. For others it may be due to people outside their placements who are enticing them to run away, promising affection, drugs or alcohol, to later exploit them sexually or criminally.

3. The location of a child's placement contributes to their vulnerability to going missing and to risks experienced during missing episodes. The 2012 inquiry showed that children in out of area children's homes were placed out of area as a last resort due to multiple placements breakdowns and because no placements were available in their areas. It also found that these children were then targeted by adults for sexual exploitation.

4. In the last five years a number of changes were introduced to address the issue of children placed inappropriately in out of area placements.

5. The Children and Families Act 2004 was updated in 2014 to include guidance on care and placement planning and associated regulations. This strengthened the responsibilities of local authorities to notify other local authorities if they place a looked after child within their area.[7] It also requires children's homes to notify their host local authority when a child is placed with them by another authority. Where a child who is not looked after is placed in a health or education placement for three months or more, or with that intention, the placing authority also has a duty to notify the host local authority prior to placement or as soon as practicable thereafter.

6. The host local authority – supported by relevant agencies in both the host and home authority – must ensure that education and health partners are provided with information about placements of looked after children into / out of their area.

7. The guidance also specified that the Director of Children's Services (DCS) should formally nominate an officer to approve all "out of area" placements. In most cases, this will be the Assistant Director of Children's Services or equivalent. The DCS must directly authorise all "at a distance placements" (placements in areas that are not neighbouring the placing local authority) and cannot delegate this authorisation to the nominated officer. Local authorities placing at significant distance in a contiguous authority, such as in excess of 50 miles, may wish to consider these placements similarly to formal "at a distance placements" and seek authorisation by the DCS.

8. The changes introduced were aimed to help local authorities be more accountable for how placement decisions were made and to encourage them to improve how they plan sufficient numbers of places to meet the needs of their looked after population (known

[6] Department for Education, 2019. Children l*ooked after in England including adoption.* Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-looked-after-children

[7]Department for Education, 2015. *The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations.* Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/441643/Children_Act_Guidance_2015.pdf

as their sufficiency duty). Under the 2010 statutory guidance on Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children local authorities have a duty to secure sufficient accommodation, both in terms of quantity and quality, to meet the needs of their looked after population '*in their local authority area, except where this is not consistent with their welfare*'.[8]

9. The approach promoted through these changes was one relying on local authorities to take appropriate steps to ensure that there are sufficient number of local places available rather than co-ordinated national approach to the issue. At the time the changes were introduced the Education Select Committee in its report on residential children's homes noted concerns that a more robust approach is likely to be required to ensure that children are always placed appropriately, particularly when they are placed more than 20 miles from their home and advocated for research to assess the feasibility of outlawing placements outside the 20 miles distance all together.[9]

Increase in the number of children in out of area placements

10. The data on children in out of area placements (see Table 1) suggests that the approach of leaving it up to local authorities to redress the uneven distribution of children's homes across the country has failed, so too has the attempt to ensure that more children are placed locally. The data suggests that more children are now placed outside their home areas and particularly in children's homes and semi-independent provision out of area. This is possibly explained by two factors, firstly that more children with complex needs are coming into care,[10] and secondly by the fact that local authorities have been experiencing years of cuts to children's service budgets which has an impact on their ability to commission services.

11. In their submission Ofsted offered evidence from their inspections stating that *'several inspections […] have found a lack of effective commissioning and sufficiency strategies to address the LA's sufficiency requirements. Without the right mix of available placements, LAs are forced to offset the shortfall by commissioning external placements, often at a distance from the LA'.*[11]

12. Contributors to this inquiry voiced concerns that *'out of area placements are driven by lack of choice, cost cutting commissioning exercises, where local authorities seek to develop cheaper services that do not always deliver the right support'*.[12]

13. The Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) in their submission to the inquiry explained that, '*the number of children in care has increased by 24% over the past decade yet there is a national shortage of foster carers (the Fostering Network puts the figure at 6,800) and a growing disconnect between the location of residential children's homes and need, which continues to be a major challenge. Homes are increasingly opening in regions where housing is cheaper which is contributing to this complex picture'.*[13]

[8]Department for Education, 2010. *Securing sufficient accommodation for looked-after children.* Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/securing-sufficient-accommodation-for-looked-after-children
[9] Education Committee, 2014. *Residential Children's Homes.* Available at: https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7560/CBP-7560.pdf
[10] The Children's commissioners, 2019. *Stability Index.* Available at: https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/cco-stability-index-2019.pdf
[11] Written evidence 68
[12] Written evidence 69
[13] Written evidence 49

Table 1. Changes in number of children placed in and out of home area by 3 types of placement that result in higher number of missing incidents from 2012 to 2018.

	All children looked after on 31 March		Placed in foster care		Living independently		Placed in secure children's homes, children homes and supported accommodation	
2011/12	67050		50260		2430		5930	
2017/18	75420		55200		3100		8530	
% increase	12%		10%		32%		44%	
	Inside boundaries	Outside boundaries	Inside boundaries	Outside boundaries	Inside boundaries	Outside boundaries	Inside boundaries	Outside boundaries
2011/12	40550	23560	32210	18040	1640	700	3210	2730
% of total in this category	60%	35%	64%	36%	70%	30%	54%	46%
2017/18	44450	30670	34160	21040	1910	1190	3510	5020
% of total in this category	59%	41%	62%	38%	62%	39%	41%	59%
Change from 2012 to 2018	Decrease 2%	Increase 6%	Decrease 2%	Increase 2%	Decrease 8%	Increase 9%	Decrease 13%	Increase 13%

Source: DFE statistical releases on looked after children

14. A closer look at whether children are placed in a local authority's own provision or that run by private or voluntary sector providers shows that the number of children in public provision inside the local authority boundaries has remained fairly stable over the last five years, while the number of children placed in private and voluntary provision increased (see Table 2). It is important to note that although the percentage increase in the voluntary sector provision appears to be big, these placements are available only for a small number of children. The majority of children in care are either placed in their own local authority provision or that run by private providers.

Table 2. Comparison of number of looked after children at 31 March 2013 and 31 March 2018 by in or out of area placements and by type of provider.

	All	Own provision (by the Local Authority)	Other Local Authority provision	Other public provision	Private provision	Voluntary/ third sector provision
All looked after children at 31 March 2013	68,110	39,620	1,280	380	21,850	1,460
All looked after children at 31 March 2018	75,420	39,670	940	430	25,550	3,830
Change from 2013 to 2018	11%	0%	-27%	13%	17%	162%
All looked after placed inside 31 March 2013	40,090	28,770	270	60	7,640	600
All looked after placed inside 31 March 2018	44,450	29,810	180	120	9,020	1,420
Change from 2013 to 2018	11%	4%	-33%	100%	18%	137%
All looked after placed outside 31 March 2013	24,400	8,250	530	320	14,210	580
All looked after placed outside 31 March 2018	30,670	9,860	760	310	16,530	2,420
Change from 2013 to 2018	26%	20%	43%	-3%	16%	317%

Source: DFE statistical releases on looked after children

15. A closer look at the number of children in out of area placements by different types of provision (Table 3), shows an increase in placements in out of area private homes and semi-independent accommodation. ADCS explained that '*with the continuing national need for local specialised care being the foremost driver, the number of homes run by LAs has fallen from 26% in 2012 to 18% in 2018. Forty three LAs (28%) do not own any children's homes, and the number rises to 60 LAs (39%) when homes that provide short-break care only are excluded. This leaves 92 LAs that can place their children in care in their own children's homes as well as in homes that they commission residential places in*'.[14]

16. The national rise in the numbers of children in the care system has had a significant and negative impact on placement choice and availability. Local authorities report experiencing '*placements refusing to accept some young people (for example children who are prolific MISPERS) due to the likely impact that these young people will have on the Ofsted grading of the unit.*'[15] Data on placement refusals are not currently shared with Ofsted which may also result in power to negotiate a higher price for a placement or in a decision being made to place children in unregulated

[14] Written evidence 49
[15] Written evidence 5

accommodation that will be less concerned with inspection's outcomes as discussed further.

17. This is important in the context of some of the written evidence received by this inquiry pointing at market forces dictating where provision is available and where children are placed as a result. In their submission the LGA conceded that children's homes *'are currently unevenly located around the country, and increasing demand means that councils can sometimes be forced to place children and young people in out of area placements, or placements that are not best-suited to the child's needs'*[16]

18. It is also important in the context of evidence presented later in this report which shoes that half all missing episodes are reported from children's homes and semi-independent accommodation.

Table 3. Comparison of all looked after children at 31 March 2013 and 31 March 2018 in out of area placements and by type of provider

	All	Own provision (by the Local Authority)	Other Local Authority provision	Other public provision	Private provision	Voluntary/ third sector provision
Foster placements 2013	18,710	8,010	350	0	10,030	330
Foster placements 2018	21,040	9,000	200		10,460	1,380
Change from 2013 to 2018	12%	12%	-43%		4%	318%
Other placement in the community 2013	690	100	20	10	550	10
Other placement in the community 2018	1,190	100	20	10	1,000	60
Change from 2013 to 2018	72%	0%	0%	0%	82%	500%
Secure units, children's homes and hostels 2013	2,820	90	125	1-5*	2,520	100
Secure units, children's homes and hostels 2018	5,020	40	130	10	4,380	470
Change from 2013 to 2018	78%	-55%	4%	100%	74%	370%
Other residential settings 2013	870	15	15	305	520	30
Other residential settings 2018	1,020	20	10	300	630	70
Change from 2013 to 2018	17%	33%	-33%	-2%	21%	133%
Residential schools 2013	790	30	40	20	610	100
Residential schools 2018	100	1-5*	10	1-5*	50	40
Change from 2013 to 2018	-87%	-83%	-75%	-75%	-92%	-60%

Source: DFE statistical releases on looked after children
**In the DfE published tables for confidentiality purposes numbers between 1 and 5 (inclusive) are not reported. For the purposes of this report in calculations the number included was 5.,*

[16] Written evidence 65

Out of area placements in unregulated accommodation

19. Alongside the increased number of children being placed in children's homes out of area the evidence submitted to this Inquiry highlights a trend of an increasing number of children being placed in semi-independent accommodation not regulated by Ofsted that is also located out of area.

20. There is no data reported at the national level on the number of children in these placements. The Children's Society's research into children in unregulated accommodation highlighted that such accommodation is used to house looked after children, care leavers, 16 and 17 year olds who are homeless and housed under the housing legislation as well as vulnerable adults up to the age of 24. It was estimated that around 8,400 young people aged 16 and 17 were living in unregulated accommodation.[17]

21. According to parliamentary answers to Tim Loughton, MP, between 2014 and 2018 there has been a 53 percent increase in the number of looked after children living independently in supported or semi-supported accommodation (up from 3,280 in 2014 to 5,020 in 2018)[18] and 97 percent increase in the number of children living in supported or semi-supported accommodation outside their home local authority area (up from 1,020 in 2014 to 2,010 in 2018).[19]

22. The APPG requested this data from local authorities in our Freedom of Information requests (FOI). Responses from 42 local authorities presented in Table four indicate that this type of placement has experienced one of the biggest increases.

23. In addition, more than three-quarters of the 41 police forces who submitted evidence to the inquiry expressed concern about the increasing numbers of children being sent to live in these placements out of area and the risks that they face.

24. These types of placements are usually made for young people aged 16+ and present a number of issues. The rise could in part be explained by the rapid rise of young people aged 16 and above becoming looked after.

25. With regards to children's homes Regulation 44 of The Children's Home (England) Regulations 2015 requires monthly visits to be completed to all children's homes and units run by a local authority, or independent registered children's home provider, by a person referred to as a Regulation 44 visitor not employed at the home nor directly responsible for it. In addition all children's homes are inspected by Ofsted to ensure the quality of care children receive in that type of provision.[20] No such requirements exist for semi-independent accommodation.

26. Yvette Stanley, Ofsted's national director for social care, explained that *'unregulated provision is allowed in law. This is when children (usually over the age of 16) need support to live independently rather than needing full-time care, Ofsted do not regulate this provision'* and *'Supported living is not regulated by Ofsted. It is for local authorities, as 'corporate parents' to make sure any placements are safe and suitable for their*

[17] Crellin, R. & Pona, I., 2015. *On your own now.* The Children's Society, Available at: https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/Supported_Accomodation_Report_2015.pdf
[18] Written Question to Department for Education, 2019. Available at: https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-03-28/238423/
[19] Written Question to Department for Education, 2019. Available at: https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-03-28/238421/
[20] Written Question to Department for Education, 2019. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5c9b837040f0b633fc95f7a9/SCCIF_children_s_homes.pdf

child to live in. They should make good decisions for children, as would be expected of any parent'.[21]

Table 4. Number of children placed in out of area placements by type of placements, comparison across 4 years (n=42)

	Semi-independent living NOT subject to regulations	Secure Children's Home	Children's Home subject to regulations	Residential Care Home	NHS/ Health Trust	Family Centre	Young	All foster placements combined
at 31 March 2016	125	51	1094	53	42	34	51	5868
at 31 March 2017	138	66	1186	52	40	39	63	6008
at 31 March 2018	224	65	1273	96	35	42	89	6407
at 31 March 2019	279	50	1268	128	30	71	89	6552
Percentage change from 2016 to 2019	123%	-2%	16%	142%	-29%	109%	75%	12%

Source: FOI responses

27. All establishments that meet the definition of a children's home[22] are required to register with Ofsted. Semi-independent accommodation does not fit the legal description of children's homes. There is no national guidance on how it should be set up or registered if children are accommodated. It often provides accommodation and support to children and adults – there is no provision in legislation that gives Ofsted or any other national inspectorate the power to regulate such accommodation. This is despite research suggesting that young people accommodated in unregulated semi-independent accommodation may be as vulnerable as those who live with foster carers and in children's homes.[23]

28. Such accommodation can be located in unsafe areas, and the amount of support these providers are commissioned to provide varies across the country. Very little data is collected on how many young people aged 16 and 17 they support, the support they offer, their safeguarding practices and the outcomes for these vulnerable young people. Few expectations are set in relation to what the good practice should be like for the children in their care.

29. Written evidence to the inquiry highlighted a number of concerns about semi-independent accommodation and the risks that young people living in these types of settings face.

[21] Ofsted blog (2019) https://socialcareinspection.blog.gov.uk/2019/07/08/unregistered-and-unregulated-provision-whats-the-difference

[22] The Care Standards Act 2000 says that 'an establishment is a children's home…if it provides care and accommodation wholly or mainly for children'

[23] Crellin, R. & Pona, I., 2015. *On your own now.* The Children's Society. Available at: www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/Supported_Accomodation_Report_2015.pdf

Concerns about quality of care in unregulated care placements

30. The Children's Society's research into 16 and 17 year olds placed in supported accommodation shows that support and safeguarding of children in such provisions often falls short of the meeting the needs of children and keeping them safe[24].

31. There is no one standard way that the quality of accommodation or support provided to looked after children in semi-independent accommodation is evaluated. Depending on the type of accommodation and who runs it there may be some standards set up by the accommodation providers themselves. Local authorities are also expected to scrutinise 'other' accommodation where they place looked after children. And the statutory guidance stipulates that 'other; accommodation should be safe, properly furnished, warm, and in a good state of repair and that providers of 'other arrangements' should be scrutinised by the local authority and there should be oversight and quality assurance[25].

32. Even though local authorities may be scrutinising provision in their areas where they place looked after children they are responsible for, they may not share that information with other local authorities. Written evidence from one of the police forces explained: '*In Central Beds there is a quality assessment process undertaken before placing any of their looked after children within an unregulated setting. However, as with all Authorities, this process only influences whether they will place their own children there and does not influence other Authorities commissioning teams. The duty to assess a premises applies to all authorities, but Bedfordshire has seen an increase in the number of looked after children placed in the county by London Boroughs. These placements have been discussed by Social Services with their London counterparts and there is anecdotal evidence that this quality scrutiny is inconsistent in its application*.'

33. Another response highlighted that '*these provisions are often in a poor physical state with staffing who do not have the education or skills to manage this group'.*[26]

Concerns about the lack of oversight

34. The 2012 APPG inquiry showed that very often police were not aware of the location of children's homes in their areas and therefore could not always adequately risk assess cases of children missing from children's homes. Following the 2012 inquiry the Government changed the regulations to allow Ofsted to share data about the location of children's home with the police. This came into force in April 2014.

35. In addition the requirements around risk assessment of areas where a new children's home can open have been introduced to ensure that children's homes are not opening somewhere where they may expose children to risks.

36. No such requirements exist in relation to unregulated accommodation for looked after children. Evidence submitted suggests that '*local authorities and police are not consulted in respect of 16 plus accommodation. Often the first awareness authorities have of new premises is when there is a spike in anti-social behaviour or persons reported missing*.'[27]

37. Police reported often not knowing about the location of unregulated settings – "*From my evidence the supported accommodation facilities not governed by OFSTED are often unknown as a vulnerable premises until the police are called for assistance. The*

[24] IBID
[25] Department for Education, 2010. *Children's Act 1989: care planning, placement and case review.* Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-care-planning-placement-and-case-review
[26] Written evidence 24
[27] Written evidence 45

nature of such premises are often short lived and then the companies move on to a new address. Frustrations around information sharing and staff input is prevalent in this type of premises as they appear to be employed in a 'caretaker role' whereby the premises has to be manned 24/7"[28]. And another police force stated that, '*The biggest problem in relation to unregulated 16 plus accommodation is that we often do not know even know of their existence unless and until there is an incident involving the police".*[29]

38. Ofsted in their submission noted: "*We have also seen an increase in the (usually short-term) use of unregulated accommodation where LAs have not been able to identify a suitable placement. Most commonly, LAs are lacking in certain placements for vulnerable adolescents. We are aware that local authorities are often responding to a crisis situation and in the absence of being able to find suitable registered accommodation, will resort to placing a child in something that is unregulated and may require registration".*[30]

39. Although any establishment that provides care 'wholly or mainly for children' and can be defined as a children's home must register with Ofsted[31], the definition of what constitutes 'care' is not always clear which may result in some providers unwillingly or willingly flouting the rules.

Issues with the National Transfer Scheme

40. Issues with out of area placements for asylum seeking children have also been raised in evidence to this inquiry.

41. On 1 July 2016 the Home Office and Department for Education launched the National Transfer Scheme (NTS). The scheme was described as a '*voluntary transfer arrangement between local authorities for the care of unaccompanied children who arrive in the UK and claim asylum*'. The scheme aims to ensure a more even distribution of caring responsibilities across the country. Local authorities can request that a child is transferred to another local authority when the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children under the age of 18 in a local authority area reaches more that 0.07% of the areas child population.[32]

42. Some of the written evidence raised concerns with the way in which the scheme has been operating, particularly around delays in transfers, problems with decision making, information sharing and lack of appropriate services in the areas that children are moved to. "*Children who have built up networks and support in one area will find it much more difficult to move after longer periods. Problems with decision making and information sharing have meant that children may be unaware that they are in the scheme, or told very last minute that they will be moved, which can be a huge shock to them. Foster carers have expressed concerns that the failure to properly inform children about their placement arrangements increases their risk of going missing*."[33]

43. Furthermore, it was suggested that some children and young people who have been moved as part of the NTS are being placed in areas that do not cater for their wishes and needs. In some instances this has caused these young people to go missing, with young people often citing wanting to return to previous foster placements as their

[28] Written evidence 27
[29] Written evidence 32
[30] Written evidence 68
[31] Ofsted, 2018. *Introduction to children's homes.* Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/726907/Introduction_to_childrens_homes_180718.pdf
[32] HM Government, 2016. *Press release, National Transfer Scheme.* Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-national-transfer-scheme-for-migrant-children
[33] Written evidence 52

reason for running away. "*Some of the receiving local authority areas lack the services needed to adequately support these young people. This is particularly where there is a shortage of specialist legal advice, cultural and religious amenities and appropriate therapeutic support. Often these areas are not used to supporting unaccompanied children and therefore awareness and knowledge amongst professionals in these areas is lacking. Without these needs being met there is a greater risk of young people going missing from placements, and can be drawn back to where they were initially placed*."[34]

Impact of out of area placements on children

44. Many contributions to this inquiry raised concerns about the impact out of area placements are having on children and young people that are wider than the risk of going missing or being exploited.

45. *"All children need to feel like they belong. This can be hard when you are in care, and even harder when you are moved away from the area you've grown up in."*[35]

46. Concerns raised related to the emotional toll and additional trauma of being placed out of area on a child as well as the way these moves are often done. One example shared describes how a 15-year old girl walked 10 miles home. She was then told by her social worker that she was being moved even further away: '*The social worker said, "You're moving into [ ]", and I was like, "Where is that?" And she said, "London". I was like, "Whoa, that's really far"… I was crying my eyes out, I was like "Why are you trying to do this to me?"…She's moved me so far, and I have to travel two hours to go see my Mum if I don't see my family, then I'm by myself."*[36]

47. Issues about attachment have also been raised: '*Psychological literature on identity suggests children are damaged by being moved away from their area. Even the emotional geographies' that children have are switched off. People that they talk to, their friends are taken away – their attachments are broken'*.[37]

48. The children and young people that we spoke to as part of this inquiry expressed that they found the moves difficult, leaving them feeling lonely and often bored.

    'I found it difficult being away from [name of place] and I was often bored with nothing to do. I did not know anyone or what there was to do in the area. It isn't always easy to meet new people or make new friends. I personally don't like having to learn new things like having to get to know an area and I don't like travelling which I would have to do when I came back to [name of place] to see family and friends.' (Young person)

49. We also received evidence that one boy was moved two and a half hours from home and had tried to end his own life on Christmas Day.

    'I came to a position where I thought, genuinely believed, that my life was meaningless. When you are that age, that's a very difficult thing to contemplate. I attempted to hang myself on Christmas Day. Yeah, I did. They walked in and I ended up going to hospital. It was a difficult experience.' (Young person)

Financial pressures

50. The inquiry did not specially focus on the costs of out of area placements or privatisation of placements for looked after children. Yet, these issues were raised in some of the submissions received.

[34] IBID
[35] Written evidence 50
[36] Written evidence 72
[37] Professional roundtable

51. In their submission ADCS noted that '*findings from the Public Accounts Committee report on Transforming Children's Services*[38] *state that this increase in the number of children in care with complex needs requiring placements in residential children's homes, coupled with the national shortage of residential children's home capacity, has contributed to a significant national increase in the cost of children in care. In areas where residential places are most scarce, costs for placements are driven up, with LAs paying widely differing prices for the same standard of care. Within the context of LA budgets having been halved since 2010, the cost, and lack of suitable placements is one of the biggest challenges and financial pressures cited by LAs, despite commissioners continuing to develop partnerships and finding solutions.'*[39]

52. Combined with the evidence that '*some of these homes cherry pick the referrals with lowest risk and behaviour management issues in order to maintain a higher Ofsted grading*'[40] and that '*LAs regularly report some independent providers of residential homes simply will not accept the most challenging young people, and where they do, the costs are high*'[41] the question needs to be asked about how much of that increase in costs is driven by negotiating power that the market conditions provide for independent providers and how much of that cost is passed on improving services for vulnerable children.

53. Professionals in the roundtable noted that '*there is a clear lack of transparency on how much is being spent on private children's homes – the Government do not know how much profit private providers are making, we know that there are some responsible providers who aren't making any profit and they are struggling but we have to assume that some of these big companies are doing it for a reason'.*[42]

54. The high cost of residential provision for adolescents with complex needs may also be driving the increase in placements in unregulated accommodation for young people aged 16+ as some evidence from individual local authorities that the inquiry had showed that this provision is significantly cheaper than the provision in children's homes.

55. Again it was noted in discussions that transparency is needed in how much is spent on such provision and how the cost translates in support provided to children.

56. The need to consider how the national regulator Ofsted can have powers to look into financial viability of services and regulate the financial side of provision, similar to the role which Monitor and the Department of Health play in the health sector[43] was also mentioned. For example, setting up a national tariff for children's home provision, to encourage competition based on the quality of service, rather than cost.

Solutions discussed

57. There was a consensus through the evidence received by this inquiry '*that market forces are currently dictating how the market operates, and there are insufficient national, regulatory or inspection safeguards to reduce some of the inherent risks of placing children away from their home authorities*'.[44]

58. Young people, local authority staff, police and professionals all made it clear that out of area placements should be reduced and only made as a last resort, reflecting the

[38] Public Accounts Committee, 2019 *Transforming children's services.* Available at: *https*://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/public-accounts/1741.pdf
[39] Written evidence 49
[40] Written evidence 69
[41] Written evidence 49
[42] Professional roundtable
[43] HM Government, 2010. *Liberating the NHS white paper.* Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/liberating-the-nhs-white-paper
[44] Written evidence 5

young person's wishes and needs and only when they are truly in the child's best interests.

59. One young person told us:
'I feel that young people should never be placed out of county. It is not fair as they will then be away from family, friends, and everything they know and are familiar with. I suppose it depends on the circumstances but for me there was no real issues as I am aware it was the only available placement. It should therefore be that the young person always stays in their area unless it is something very serious.'

60. On the other hand participants reported that *'there is a real feeling that the voice of the child is not given sufficient consideration when deciding to accommodate the child, in some place, other than their home town (at times), which is surprising given the logistical demands of delivering appropriate social care to someone who may be hundreds of miles away, and when police try to address problems with distant placements, we struggle in terms of getting sufficient grip or access to key workers'.*[45]

61. Submissions stated that 'Listening to the voice of the child regarding a placement is of paramount importance. It is not always possible or appropriate to give a child choice over the location of their placement, but wherever possible, their needs, concerns and preferences should be taken seriously to ensure they feel empowered and valued. They should be consulted over their care plan and their views should be included and respected'.[46] [47]Through evidence submitted examples were shared where local areas

Case study A: Wigan

Wigan have taken steps to address their practice around taking children into care where they are placed. At the time they made their submission into this inquiry (May 2019), they had not placed a looked after child out of borough for seven months.

They had also reduced the number of children looked after from 479 in March 2018 to 452 in March 2019.

Wigan recognised that in order for them to see a reduction in the number of out of area placements that they were making, they needed to strengthen their assessments and plans and improve the quality of decision making at legal gateway in order to reduce the number of children being subject to care proceedings or becoming looked after.

They also strengthened their internal placements by improving support to, and raising confidence, in their foster carers to help them care for more complex children.

Wigan's assessments and plans look more closely at the strengths and assets that are available within the child's natural support network and importantly, identify these as early as possible.

They were clear that preventing children from becoming looked after is not about pulling up the draw bridge or raising their thresholds, but about ensuring that they keep children with their families whenever possible.

This preventative work has reduced the overall size of the looked after group and Wigan have 27 less looked after children than they had last year - which impacts on the number of placements they need, including out of borough placements.

[45] Written evidence 45
[46] Written evidence 51
[47] Written evidence 51

proactively make decisions to a) place children locally; and b) provide services to meet their needs locally as described in cases studies.

Case study B: St Christopher's Safe Steps

In 2014 St Christopher's launched their Safe Steps children's homes in London as part of a Department for Education innovation project to pilot a new model for protecting young women at risk of child sexual exploitation and other extra familial threats.

The project focuses on keeping young people in their local areas and providing them with the opportunities to learn about healthy relationships and how to self-assess risk in different situations.

The Safe Steps models focuses on building positive relationships with young people to counteract the pull of negative influences within the community.

62. Other examples were also mentioned: '*Some of the activity LAs are engaged in which serve to reduce children being placed out of area are: developing appropriate local emergency accommodation options; developing new local housing and support models for children aged 16 plus; in-house foster care recruitment in order to save money on reducing contracts with IFAs, with one authority stating that this clear drive has resulted in a cost reduction of over £3 million in the last three years; jointly commissioned/delivered integrated emotional health and well-being service (LA/CCG/CAMHS) supporting improved placement stability for children looked after. In LAs where numbers of looked after children have reduced this is usually in those authorities whose historically high numbers of UASC have been reduced as part of the National Transfer Scheme, or where there has been DfE Innovation Programme funding for projects to reduce children in care numbers'.*[48]

63. It is recognised that some children do need to be placed in out of area placements for safeguarding reasons, but '*this should be an active care planning decision and not about where a placement is available'*.[49]

64. Participants in the inquiry stated that that '*more needs to be done to encourage the provision of residential children's home beds where they are needed rather than where they are most profitable ie housing is cheaper*.'[50]

65. Participants in the inquiry agreed that '*It is important that the clustering of several children's homes in a small number of areas that may suffer from higher deprivation is addressed. Councils, with their knowledge and understanding of local areas, working closely with partners, should have greater say over where private care homes are set up, to avoid excessive strain on local services which can be to the detriment of both children in care and other children in the locality*'.[51]

66. There was also consensus that leaving care or semi-independent accommodation for all young people under the age of 18, should be made subject to registration, regulation and inspection. '*The essential requirement is that such provision operates to nationally agreed set of regulations designed to ensure the safety, well-being and protection of this group of young people, perhaps those with the least support offered by the care system'.*

[48] Written evidence 49
[49] Written evidence 5
[50] Written evidence 39
[51] Written evidence 65

Chapter 2. Children missing from out of area placements

Scale of children going missing from out of area placements

67. The DfE do not currently publish data on the number of children who go missing from out of area placements and therefore the true scale of the problem is not known. We do know that almost half (49% or 34,060 of 70,250 missing incidents) of all missing incidents are related to children going missing from children's homes, secure accommodation and semi-independent units.

68. Through a parliamentary question, the inquiry was able to obtain data in relation to children who go missing from children's homes from both in and out of area placements[52].

69. This data, outlined in Table 5, shows that on the 31st March 2018, missing incidents from children's homes made up 36% of all missing incidents and that 41% of missing incidents from children's homes were related to children placed in out of area placements.

Table 5: Children who went missing from residential children's homes

	31 March 2015	31 March 2016	31 March 2017	31 March 2018
Number of missing incidents from children's homes	13,040	17,890	23,880	25,600
Percentage of missing incidents from children's homes of all missing incidents	45%	42%	39%	36%
Number of missing incidents from children's homes for children placed inside local authority boundaries	8,640	11,210	14,530	15,140
Percentage of missing incidents from children placed inside local authority boundaries	66%	63%	61%	59%
Number of missing incidents from children's homes for children placed outside local authority boundaries	4,360	6,700	9,410	10,490
Percentage of missing incidents from children's homes for children placed outside local authority boundaries	34%	37%	39%	41%

70. Whilst incidents of children missing from children's homes make up a fairly large proportion (36%), of all missing incidents the inquiry sought to get a better understanding of the wider picture of children missing from out of area care placements.

71. The FOI submitted to local authorities as part of this inquiry asked them to report on the numbers of children missing and the number of missing incidents from out of area placements within their areas. Table 6 demonstrates that whilst the response rate to this question was fairly low with just 34 local authorities being able to provide this data,

[52] Department for Education, 2019. *Written Answer: Children in care: Location*. Available at: https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-06-24/268392/

the data received shows that both the number of children missing from out of area placements and the number of missing incidents from out of area placements are increasing year on year with around 14% of all children in out of area placements going missing on average 5.1 times.

72. This increase is happening at a disproportionate rate when compared to the numbers of looked after children and the numbers of all those placed in out of area placements.

Table 6. Number of looked after children missing from out of area placements, 3 year comparison (n=34)

	Number of looked after children	Number of children in out of area placements	Percentage of children in out of area placements	Number of children missing from out of area placements	Percentage of children going missing from out of area placements	Number of missing incidents from out of area placements	Ratio of incidents per child
1 April 2015-31 March 2016	25,795	10,891	42%	1,151	11%	5,217	4.5
1 April 2016-31 March 2017	26,433	10,984	42%	1,427	13%	7,369	5.2
1 April 2017-31 March 2018	26,423	11,259	43%	1,526	14%	8,389	5.5
Increase between 2015/16 and 2018/19	2%	3%	-	33%	-	61%	-

Source: FOI responses

Reasons children and young people go missing from out of area placements

73. Evidence collected during the 2012 inquiry into children who go missing from care suggested that being placed a long way from home is often a factor that causes them to run away or go missing.

74. The current inquiry sought to explore this idea at a more granular level. The evidence submitted was clear that the reasons why children go missing are multifaceted. There was some overlap in the reasons that young people reported for going missing out of area with the reasons that many young people cite for going missing in area – to spend time with friends, to see family, due to not being happy about the placement.[53] In other cases the reasons are specific to being moved to out of area placements – not having any say in that decision and being moved without due preparation, infrequency of contact with family and friends, lack of contact with social worker due to distance, loneliness and isolation. Inadequacy or poor support for children and young people who have been placed out of area was frequently mentioned in evidence submitted.

75. The evidence presented below reflects the views and experiences of young people who have been placed out of area and have been missing from these placements. This evidence combined with professional testimonies help us go some way to understanding some of the reasons behind why children and young people are going missing from out of area placements and the risks that they face whilst away.

[53] Rees, G., 2011. *Still Running 3.* The Children's Society. Available at: https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/tcs/still_running_3_full_report_final.pdf

Young people not having a voice in placement moves

76. Young people told us that often they were not given a choice about their placement moves and in all but one case they had not been told in advance about their out of area move. We heard from most of the young people that we spoke to that they had only been told about their move on the same day that it happened. In one case the young person was not told where they were going until they were half way there. Young people often reported feeling '*angry'*, '*pissed off'* and '*scared'* about this.

77. 'One thing I did not like was that every move I have had I was told on the day I moved. There was no preparation. One move, the new carers just turned up at 9 pm and took me. This is horrible and I do not think it should be left to the last minute. This is unfair on the young person and can be scary and unsettling.' (Young person)

78. Young people felt that being given the opportunity to meet the people in the new placement and see the new home before they moved would make the transition better for them, helping them to feel more settled and secure early on.

79. 'In a best case, there should be a good transition where the young person meets the new carers and sees the home before they move. If this is not possible then there should be someone to sit down with you to fully explain and give you the chance to ask questions. Not being able to meet the staff, other young people or foster carers is the biggest issue for me.' (Young person)

80. In some instances young people suggested that they had been given a vague idea about why they were being moved to an out of area placement, but that these reasons were often not clear:

'I've been told all different reasons for being placed out of area, they said it was because of some ..girl but I don't know about this … girl. They said it was about some … men but I don't know about no … men. They said it was because I was going missing all the time but they have never actually given me a specific reason so I couldn't tell you.'

81. When reasons are discussed with young people we heard that they are often poorly explained:

'It's never really been explained they said it was because of my CSE and because I was a high risk missing person but they didn't really explain.'

82. In the professional round table one participant suggested that speaking to young people about their level of 'risk' is an alienating way of communicating with them which could inhibit professionals from learning about a young person's needs and vulnerabilities. This information is vital for the provision of early support and could prevent missing episodes, helping to keep young people safe. '*The language of risk is unhelpful, labelling children according to risk causes problems straight away. What does it actually mean to be high risk, it means nothing. We need to start talking about needs or vulnerabilities of the children, what are their needs? What are their vulnerabilities? Move away from the language of risk, because it is used to justify so many decisions that actually further harm children*.'[54]

Dissatisfaction with placements

83. Whilst feeling dissatisfaction with care placements is not exclusive to out of area placements, the children and young people that we spoke to discussed how feeling unhappy and unsupported in their out of area placements including, residential, foster and semi-supported settings had been a contributing factor in their missing episodes. The sense that young people do not feel listened to or understood in these placements

[54] Professional roundtable

was also conveyed. Young people often stated that they did not feel respected by the foster carers and children's home staff.

84. *'There just needs to more respect and more caution taken with certain carers and stuff, I have had multiple placements where I have been shown no respect.' (Young person)*

85. Nor did they feel that staff made the effort to get to know them and understand their individual needs.

'I think staff in residential and foster homes, instead of trying to control the kids they should try and understand them.' (Young person)

86. One young person who was living in semi-supported accommodation told us that they had black mould in her room and that despite reporting it to the support staff nothing had been done about the problem.

Unfair restrictions placed on looked after children

87. We heard that children in care are typically afforded less free time than children who are not looked after. It was made clear that this can be due to genuine risks to the child and the need to ensure their safety. However, it was also suggested that it can be due to the nature of the care sector and a perception by professionals that looked after children need higher levels of supervision than they actually do.

88. Young people often cited having a lack of activities, free time and freedom, restrictions associated with living in residential children's homes, as reasons why they went missing.

89. *'Most of the time I go missing from out of area it's just because like you've got no freedom you can't walk out, you can't even go to the corner shop - you can't just go for a walk - you've got to ask. You have to ask, can I go out? And they say no, the staff can walk behind you. But obviously, when you're angry you don't want someone to be behind you.' (Young person)*

90. Young people discussed how often they were restricted from spending time outside with new friends in their new areas.

91. *'I never used to go missing at home but that was because I was young and I didn't have any friends but now I have friends it just pisses me off that they want me to act like a normal teenager but in order for me to act like a normal teenager I have to be able to go outside and see my mates.' (Young person)*

92. Young people understood that by going outside without permission they would be reported missing to the police. However, the sense that having their liberty restricted would not deter them from going out to see friends and family was conveyed.

93. *'I just wanted to go out, at that time I didn't have any free time or nothing so I couldn't go out so I just went out. Free time you get like a set amount of time to go out by yourself but if you don't have that and you go out then you get reported missing. And I didn't have it but I still went out so I got reported missing.' (Young person)*

94. One young person told us that the way to stop looked after children going missing is to give them more freedom.

95. *'If you let young people have free time and see their friends and family they won't have a reason to runaway'. (Young person)*

96. Positively, one young person told us that their out of area placement had reduced their missing episodes as they now felt happier in the residential children's home that they were living in.

97. *'It has been good - it is actually better here than it was at the other place - it's a better house, better staff and that.' (Young person)*

98. Whist it was encouraging to hear that some young people had positive experiences of moving, it should not be the case that young people have to move home and local authorities in order to find a placement that suits their needs. We must challenge this idea and ensure that there are high quality children's homes in all local areas – a young person should not have to have their life's disrupted to find a placement in which they feel happy and safe.

99. The issue of children's homes over reporting children and young people as missing when they were just a few minutes later than their set curfew, for example, was also mentioned. Durham police force told the inquiry about their work with children's homes in their area to try and combat the issue of over reporting for reasons such as the above. The force achieved a 26% reduction in reported missing incidents from children's homes between 2017 and 2018. They take a restorative approach within their children's homes to avoid instances of young people being unnecessarily criminalised.

Inability to maintain relationship with social worker

100. Maintaining trusted relationships with young people who have been moved out of area was suggested to be difficult. One local authority told us that they were aware that placing children in area would be beneficial for multiple reasons, including for maintaining relationships with social workers. '*We recognise that local placements would result in more effective and meaningful relationships between children and their social workers if they were closer, contact with family would be easier to facilitate, access to education and CAMHS within the [area] boundaries would be much easier to facilitate for children*.'[55]

101. The young people we spoke to had often been told that they should speak to their social workers if they wanted to raise any placement issues however the geographical distance between them often meant that they felt dissatisfied with the amount of contact that they had with their social workers.

102. One young person told us that they were frustrated with the lack of support they got from their social worker after telling them they were unhappy with an out of area placement. This young person described how the only way they felt they would be heard was by 'kicking off'.

103. 'To get out of that placement I just kicked off, I was getting ill from lack of protein so I just kicked off. I kicked off at the foster carers and then I was moved.' (Young person)

104. Another young person told us that they had been moved from one out of area placement to another with no warning and unaccompanied by their social worker:

'So when I was in Area A, obviously my social worker is in Area B, so there was no one.'

105. The police also recognised the issue: *"There is a real challenge with an individual social workers ability to develop relationships with the children and to ensure that the safeguarding risk assessments are completed."*[56]

106. And professionals recognised that geographical distance between a young person and their social worker impacted on their ability to form good relationships. *"Anecdotal*

[55] Written evidence 5
[56] Written evidence 20

evidence from children we support suggests that the distance makes a meaningful relationship with social workers more problematic'.[57]

Loneliness and isolation

107. 'Children's voices are never listened to, they always run away for one or two reasons but generally it is always to go home. Even though they have been put in care, they want to go home whether that is to family, friends or if that is to an area that they identify with."[58]

108. 'Going home' to see family, friends and to be back in a familiar setting was mentioned in the majority of the evidence as the reason why children and young people going missing from out of area care placements. *"The most common primary reason for going missing is seeking contact with family/friends/ boyfriend/girlfriend and this is nearly three times more common than the next most popular reason, which is unhappy/disagreement in placement."*[59]

109. The young people that we spoke to were explicit about this:

'The reasons I have been reported missing from ['Area 1'] and ['Area 2'] have been to see my friends or girlfriend. It is also nice to come back to your local area that you know and are familiar with. I expect a lot of other young people would also want to see their families if they do not get enough or any contact.'

110. The fact that placing a child away from their homes increases their experience of loneliness and isolation was also raised in a number of evidence submissions. "*In our experience, a child placed out of area is initially very isolated and lonely: their social network has been disrupted and they miss family members, neighbours and familiar places*."[60]

111. One young person made the link between them feeling lonely and going missing:

'I was moved out of my county and experienced a lot of isolation and loneliness, I turned to drink and drugs and got involved with wrong crowds of people who had flats on an estate in the new county I was in. I thought they were my friends and they wasn't sometimes. I was missing from home because I had been beaten up and under the influence, waking up in parks or random peoples flats.'

112. Feeling isolated and lonely not only increases a young person's likelihood of going missing it also makes them more vulnerable when they do so as they are more at risk of being groomed and coerced into criminal activity - this will be discussed in more detail later on in this report.

Maintaining contact with family and friends

113. All of the children and young people that submitted evidence into the inquiry discussed how contact with friends and family in their home local area was facilitated. It was suggested that being supported to keep in touch with family and friends could reduce young people going missing from out of area placements. '*To see their family and friend's. A way to respond to this would be for the Social Worker to make sure the young person still has regular contact with their family and friends, although this doesn't always happen*.'[61]

114. One of the young people we spoke to reported a positive experience:

[57] Written evidence 51
[58] Professional roundtable
[59] Written evidence 3
[60] Written evidence 51
[61] Written evidence 70

'I get to see my mum every two weeks, I get to go down there and I phone her every day off the house phone here [children's home].'

115. But the rest of the young people had experienced difficulties speaking to and seeing their family and friends.

116. 'Contact with family can also be lost when you have been moved away. I did not feel there was any support with helping me keep in contact with my family. The first out of county placement I had was two to three hours away from [name of home place] and on my birthday I only got to see my mum and brother for 90 minutes due to the travelling. I did not have a chance to see my nan, grandad or cousins as I hadn't got a phone at this time I couldn't even call anyone. Once I did get a phone the times it could be used were restricted.' (Young person)

117. The cost of travel was suggested to be a barrier to young people keeping in touch with family and friends. '*Many children in care come from families experiencing poverty, so it can be difficult for parents to afford the travel costs of visiting their children in out of area placements. This means that they cannot sustain the relationship, so the young person takes it upon themselves to visit them instead.*'[62]

118. In some cases young people discussed local authority support with the cost of travel. However, we heard examples of how problems with the administration of this support stopped family members being able to come and visit young people in their new areas.

119. *'When I lived in [Area] basically they used to send travel warrants up for my mum and my dad to come on the train but they never always signed the warrants so my mum could sometimes not get the ticket or my dad.' (Young person)*

120. The distance that young people were placed from home impacted on the frequency and duration of family visits. One young person told us that they had been placed a five hour train journey from their family which made face-to-face meetings difficult.

121. *'When I was in [Area], I was there for six weeks and I saw my mum once and I saw my dad once. Then my dad went in the hospital and they took me. But because it was so far to travel my mum said 'I'm not travelling that, I can't do it'. She was poorly and my dad was poorly at the time so they couldn't travel.' (Young person)*

[62] Written evidence 69

The risks and factors contributing to risk to children and young people who go missing from out of area placements

Sexual and criminal exploitation

122. Seventy one percent (29) of the police forces that submitted evidence into this inquiry believed that placing children and young people out of area increases their vulnerability to becoming sexually and criminally exploited.

123. Looked after children and young people are known to be at significant risk of being groomed for exploitation, both due to the experiences and situations that lead to them becoming looked after in the first place and due to some factors associated with being in care.

124. It was clear from the evidence that when placement moves take place often new protective factors are not build around them in their new areas.

125. The National Crime Agency (NCA)[63] highlights that a child frequently going missing is a potential indicator that they may be being criminally exploited using the county lines model. Furthermore, a recent report by The Children's Society[64] agreed that going missing is closely linked with exploitation, adding that often these young people are missing for long periods of time.

126. The evidence we received pointed towards the fact that for many children and young people the specific risks that they face when they go missing from these placements are no different from the risks that young people face when they go missing from placements within their home local authority. However, a number of factors result in

[63] The National Crime Agency, 2019. https://nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/what-we-do/crime-threats/drug-trafficking/county-lines
[64] Turner. A. Belcher, L. & Pona, I., 2019, *Counting Lives.* The Children's Society. Available at: https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/appg-on-county-lines-briefing-note_final.pdf

the risk of exploitation becoming magnified for children placed out of area, putting them at increased risk of harm.

127. *'When I was in this area I just used to go out with my friends or I used to go to my mum's every day or my friend and that was it and then when I moved out of county the first missing I had, basically me and my friend went out and then met like this man and he comes up to us and said "do you want to come to my house?" and that was me and this other girl and I was 14 and she was 15 and it was really weird.' (Young person)*

128. We received a number of responses suggesting that some children and young people were being coerced and groomed into going missing from their out of area placements by the same people they had been exploited by in their old placements.

129. Whilst it was widely acknowledged that on the surface placing a child away from perceived risks seems like it would protect the child, in reality this is often not the case. '*It is known that gangs and individuals do target care homes to specifically look for those vulnerable children to exploit. Placed children still have access to mobile phones and social media and equally it does not take long before those children can be contacted by the very persons that the placing authority were trying to protect them from*.'[65]

130. It is clear that the risk of exploitation is often just displaced when young people are sent to live in new geographical areas. For many young people this means that that the people coercing them into going missing remain the same. However, the evidence suggests that the risks that they face whilst missing in an unfamiliar place can be particularly higher.

131. *'Moving a young person out of area to keep you away from trouble doesn't always work. I know that you can be easily influenced by other people in other areas and things can go bad again as most of us in care are vulnerable anyway.' (Young person)*

132. It was suggested that unless a greater level of support was made available to the young person in their new area the risks that they faced in their old area would follow them. '*Unless the out of area placement can offer something that is not available in their "home area", the risk is just moved*.'[66]

133. There was evidence that the relocation of looked after children who are being criminally exploited in one area to another can create opportunities for criminal networks to expand their reach. There was the suggestion from a number of police forces that by sending children to live out of area, councils are unwittingly becoming 'recruiting sergeants' for county lines drug gangs. '*Our missing person coordinators have identified a risk that local authorities may be inadvertently be opening up county lines. By placing a child in a distant placement, who is being exploited to deal drugs, can impact on the vulnerabilities in the host authority are, but at this time this remains a suspicion or concern*."[67]

134. It was highlighted in some of the professional evidence that criminal networks may identify locations where they know there are a large number of children's homes receiving young people from outside of area and use these opportunities to coerce and recruit new young people. '*We know that county lines gangs have been sent to areas where young people are predominantly placed out of area to scout new "opportunities" where they can develop "business" and recruit new members*.'[68]

135. The evidence suggested that by placing young people away from their local areas could increase the safeguarding risk to that child as well as potentially increasing the

[65] Written evidence 7
[66] Written evidence 25
[67] Written evidence 45
[68] Written evidence 69

risk to the new local communities that the child is moved to, enabling criminal networks to expand their reach.

Loneliness and isolation as a factor exacerbating risk

136. Loneliness and isolation of a child in an out of area placements were often mentioned as factors contributing to risk of exploitation. The police often reported that individuals seeking to coerce young people into criminal activity exploit that young person's desire to fit in or 'belong' offering them the chance to be part of a 'family' and promising them money and status. '*Some people will seek to exploit a child's desire to "belong" - on a regular basis this leads to an increase in missing episodes and risks of being exposed to sexual/criminal exploitation and gang culture*.'[69]

137. Experiencing loneliness and isolation is unfortunately common for many looked after children and care leavers[70]. However, being placed out of area was said to increase this feeling, which may increase their vulnerability. '*One of the vulnerabilities that potential abusers seek to exploit is social isolation. If a young person is moved many miles away from their networks it will increase their isolation and may make them even more susceptible to exploitation for criminal or sexual purposes. This may make them vulnerable to exploitation from abusers local to their new placement*.'[71]

Child's special educational needs as a factor exacerbating risk

138. We heard that children and young people who had been placed out of area often struggled to access support for any special educational needs (SEN) or speech and language difficulties. '*The challenges around the transfer of SEN and CAMHS responsibilities can slow down progress and make it more difficult for a young person to access education and mental health care when they move to a placement in a different authority*.'[72]

139. This is greatly concerning given the significant research base highlighting that young people's experience of SEN increases their risk of CSE[73] and that the factors associated with SEN which are taken advantage of in the grooming process for CSE are mirrored within CCE and county lines.[74] We even heard evidence of special educational facilities being specifically targeted by exploiters.

140. A further concern is that many children and young people who are at risk of CCE are found to have undiagnosed learning difficulties.[75] It seems likely that these problems will be exacerbated for looked after children placed out of area as often their education is disrupted - making it less likely that they will have had an appropriate assessment of their needs. The issue of disrupted education is explored in more detail later in this document. '*So a lot of people talked about finding young people with learning disabilities being really, really vulnerable, so we've experienced young people who have got a diagnosed learning disability. Also I'd kind of argue that the majority of your young boys and young men have an undiagnosed learning need and that predominantly has been because they've been out of education, they might not have been in education long enough to have the right assessment*.'[76]

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[69] Written evidence 19
[70] Action for Children, 2017. *It starts with hello.* Available at: https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/media/9724/action_for_children_it_starts_with_hello_report__november_2017_lowres.pdf
[71] Written evidence 32
[72] Written evidence 3
[73] The Children's Commissioner, 2013. *If only someone had listened*. Available at: http://www.thebromleytrust.org.uk/files/chidrens-commission.pdf
[74] Turner. A. Belcher, L. & Pona, I., 2019, *Counting Livers.* The Children's Society. Available at: https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/appg-on-county-lines-briefing-note_final.pdf
[75] IBID
[76] Written evidence 70

Child's lack of familiarity with the area as a factor exacerbating risk

141. The children and young people we spoke to reported feeling unsafe in new areas as they didn't know which areas were safe to go and didn't know the people who spend time in them. This raises their level of risk when missing as they might not be able to assess which areas are safe.

142. 'Well I don't feel safe in placements because of you, not like you never know what's going to happen but it's like it's a new area you don't know the people.' (Young person)

143. This is made worse by the fact that these children and young people will be less likely to have a social network around them. '*When a young person goes missing from an out of area placement, they have little or no knowledge of the local area and no social network to support them*.'[77]

Travelling long distances as a factor exacerbating risk

144. We heard from a number of professionals that many children and young people who go missing are forced to travel alone, using various methods including hitchhiking and different forms of public transport that automatically place them at risk. '*In addition, attempts to return to their home area inevitably take more time and involve more complex transport plans. Apps and search engines may make even longer journeys seem possible but do not give information about hazards, costs, access to food and drink or facilities etc*.'[78]

145. For children placed long distances from family, friends and the place they call home this risk is increased as they have to travel longer distances to get home. Most children and young people in care do not have access to a regular supply of money. This can make them more vulnerable to exploitation as it is well known that one way perpetrators groom young people is through the promise of money in return for tasks that ultimately result in the young person being sexually or criminally exploited. It is important to note that the two are not mutually exclusive.

146. We heard evidence of young people being forced to beg, borrow and steal in order to raise enough money to pay for transport, as well as travelling illegally on public transport which places them at risk of becoming criminalised at increased risk of exploitation. '*We had contact with [one young person] who repeatedly ran away when she was in care out of area. She would jump trains, or hitchhike to her old town to stay with friends, but eventually wound up with strangers who abused her, just so she could see her mum who was in hospital, because social services wouldn't let her. If social services arranged regular visits to the hospital to see her mum then she would have been much safer but they refused, so she found her own way.'*[79]

147. As previously mentioned, a commonly held belief amongst local authorities is that placing children in remote and rural settings disrupts the risk of them being exploited and going missing. However, we heard that the remoteness of a placement does not act as a deterrent and when young people go missing from rural placements they are often forced to make longer and more complex journeys on their own. '*Our data suggests that the remoteness of the location of a care home or a care placement does not deter a young person from going missing. Indeed, it may simply increase the risk by making the journey longer and more hazardous.*'[80]

148. Having to travel long distances also increases the length of time that young people are missing. Any time that a child is missing they are potentially at risk. This means that as

[77] Written evidence 51
[78] IBID
[79] Written evidence 66
[80] Written evidence 51

the length of time they are missing for increases so does the possible risk posed to their safety. '*Our data to date also shows that, whilst children in the care of another local authority are only a little more likely to go missing than other children in care, they are considerably more likely to be missing for long periods. This is almost always attributable to attempts to return to their home area*.'[81]

Disrupted education as a factor exacerbating risk

149. The children and young people that we spoke to often mentioned that their education had been disrupted due to their placement moves.

150. This can increase the risks that the young people face. One young person who had been in out of area placements for over two years told us that she had only spent two weeks of this time in mainstream education:

'Out of area I have only been in one mainstream education and that was for two weeks.'

151. It was common for young people to report that they had missed out on long periods of education or were attending Alternative Provision (AP), settings such as Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). Alternative provision settings are frequently catch all places, made up of children and young people with a wide variety of vulnerabilities and needs. '*Sometimes the young person's education will be done through in-house tutoring, which restricts their opportunities to build healthy relationships with their peers, or they are sent to a PRU, where they are schooled with other high risk young people and therefore their own risk increases*.'[82]

152. The issue of disrupted education was raised as a risk factor in the professional evidence. We heard evidence of children and young people being placed on reduced timetables in PRUs and missing out on PSHE and the chance to learn about healthy relationships and how to keep safe. '*We frequently see vulnerable young people on part time timetables. These young people are entitled to full time education. It is highly likely that experiencing any of, or a combination of, the above will result in young people missing out on vital components of education – specifically RSE and PSHE.'*[83]

153. At a public event in December 2017 this APPG[84] heard evidence of criminal networks targeting PRUs, coercing and recruiting young people to sell drugs using the county lines model. A parent of a young person told us that her son had become more vulnerable to exploitation after attending a PRU.

154. Furthermore, the sense that being educated at home can perpetuate the experience of loneliness and isolation experienced by looked after children placed out of area was conveyed. *'Disengagement from school, or being schooled at home, prevents young people from making friends and settling into their new area'*.[85] Loneliness and isolation as risk factors for children placed out of area will be explored in more detail below.

Lack of access to services as a factor exacerbating risk

155. We frequently heard that placing children and young people out of area can act as a barrier to them accessing services that they are entitled to and need. '*Access to*

[81] IBID
[82] Written evidence 69
[83] Written evidence 70
[84] Turner. A. Belcher, L. & Pona, I., 2019, *Counting Livers.* The Children's Society. Available at: https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/appg-on-county-lines-briefing-note_final.pdf
[85] Written evidence 69

healthcare and other local support services, including schools, can all be jeopardised by relocation.'[86]

156. When a child is placed out of area the responsible or placing local authority has a duty to provide the young person with the necessary services and support to safeguard and promote their welfare.[87] However, we heard evidence that some local authorities are neglecting this duty, taking an 'out of sight, out of mind' approach. '*I do not think necessarily the risk to the child rises when placed out of county in being targeted by OCGs etc., I think the issue surrounds the placing authority ownership of the child. I see continued "out of sight out of mind" mentality from placing authorities'*.[88]

157. We heard that for some young people this can leave them without vital interventions, placing them at increased risk. '*Hosting authorities do not have the same responsibilities to provide support to a distant placed child as a local child. This is a totally unacceptable situation. At its very best this leads to slow time commissioning / intervention and at its worst can lead to the child being exposed to risk or lacking the support they need*.'[89]

158. We heard how some local areas extend their non-statutory services to children and young people who have been placed there by other local authorities. However, it was clear that this is not consistent practice. '*Children and young people placed out of county are largely unable to access services to support them. [Our service] works with children and young people at risk of CSE who are placed here from out of county but I am aware of other authorities who do not extend their services for children in their areas placed from other authorities*.'[90]

159. The Children's Commissioner's report, *Children's Voices*[91] found that having professional counselling was one of the most important factors in supporting looked after young people through difficult times, including experiencing placement changes. This is concerning as the evidence we received frequently states that when young people are moved away from their home local authorities they often find it difficult to access the support services they need in a timely way, often being placed at the bottom of a waiting list. This is particularly pertinent for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and other local mental health services '*Overall, however, children living out of area continue to be more vulnerable to delays in receiving support (such as access to health assessments, CAMHS services or school places). In a small number of inspections, we found the failure of placing authorities to consult effectively with the area authority where they are considering making a distant placement – an important statutory duty – disadvantaged children unnecessarily*'.[92]

Concerns about safety of children unregulated settings

160. Evidence submitted to the inquiry suggest the police and other professionals have a lot of concerns about safety to children placed in unregulated settings. It was stated that '*These providers also house adults who may be criminals themselves and are not regulated by OFSTED the same way that Care Homes for Children are. These types of premises regularly report children missing because they have not returned on time and*

[86] Written evidence 19
[87] The Department for Education, 2010. *Care Planning, Placement and Case Review*. Available at: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/959/regulation/20/made
[88] Written evidence 7
[89] Written evidence 45
[90] Written evidence 39
[91] The Children's Commissioner, 2019. *Stability Index.* Available at: https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/cco-childrens-voices-childrens-experiences-of-instability-in-the-care-system-july-2019.pdf
[92] Written evidence 68

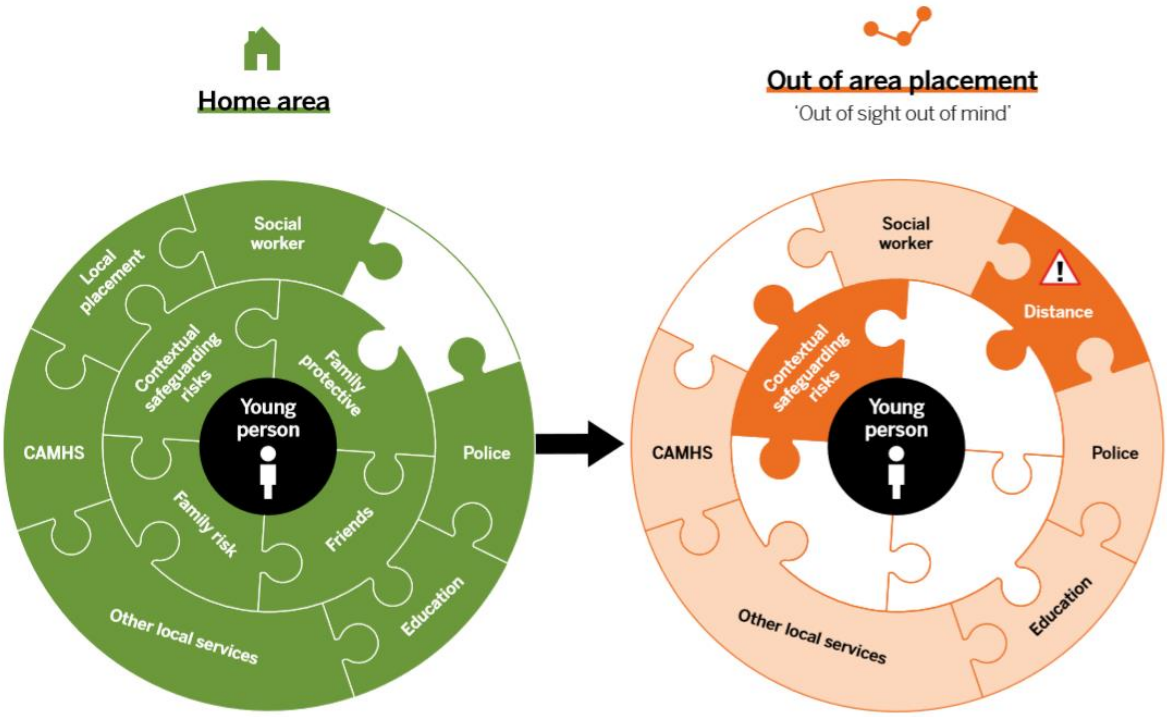
make little or no effort to locate them. These premises are often well known to local criminals and are seen as an easy target location for recruitment of new children. The premises have limited number of staff and are therefore not able to give the time or attention to these very vulnerable children'.[93]

161. Examples were shared of a '*17 year old with mental health problems, susceptible to exploitation, was placed in unregulated accommodation alongside another 17 year old male linked with a London gang and known for carrying weapons'.*[94]

162. Other examples included a child who had been sexually exploited and then housed alongside a perpetrator of CSE.

163. Police report that *'Hostels state that it is not their role to make any enquiries if a young person goes missing and do not go into the community to look'*.[95]

164. Evidence received shows that '*children are often sharing the placement with adults who have addiction issues, are known to the police for criminal offences, and/or experiencing severe mental health difficulties*'.[96] The same concerns have been previously highlighted by The Children's Society.[97]



Solutions discussed

165. Evidence from many of the professionals working with this group of young people stressed the importance of understanding a young person's vulnerabilities and needs when making placement decisions in order to reduce missing episodes. Indeed, during

[93] Written evidence 9
[94] Written evidence 19
[95] IBID
[96] Written evidence 42
[97] Crellin, R. & Pona, I., 2015. *On your own now.* The Children's Society, Available at: https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/Supported_Accomodation_Report_2015.pdf

the decision maker round table one person noted: '*We need to understand what drives children to run away, we need to address the push and the pull factors – taking into account extra familial harms. When we understand all of this we will start to see a reduction in missing both in and out of area*.'[98]

166. One young person told us that the best way to stop other young people going missing from placements was to:

'Match them to the placement they are put in instead of leaving them in the first placement you find.'

167. There was a consensus among participants in the round tables and through written evidence that placing children's wishes and feelings at the centre of decision making about placements can lead to improved experiences of children of those placements.

175. This inquiry found that whilst the risks facing looked after children and young people placed out of area are similar to those living in area, factors directly related to the moves make these risks more pronounced. In addition, anecdotal evidence suggests that as the distance a child is placed from where they call home increases so does their level of risk.

176. Much of the evidence from young people, the police and professionals gave weight to tangible problems and factors that increase the risks facing looked after children when they are placed out of area. However, a number of respondents stated that a failure of professionals to recognise the trauma and emotional impact that placement moves can have on young people, who have likely already suffered neglect and trauma in their lives[99], may also be detrimental to their safety in a new area. Humberside police force stated, '*From experience, I don't feel there is enough support or funding to tackle some of the issues these children are facing within their home or local environment. Many of the children who would be considered for an out of area placement already have attachment issues and have been rejected or neglected by their families. To move them out of the area where they have some form of support through friends/family can be significantly detrimental*.'[100]

177. This was said to be made worse when placement moves are frequent which is concerning given that the latest Stability Index published by the Children's Commissioner[101] found that over a three year period, 10% of looked after children experience four or more placement moves. For children placed out of area this figure is likely to be much higher as we know that they often have more complex needs making them more likely to experience placement breakdowns and subsequent moves. '*This is particularly pertinent to children who are frequently removed from one placement to another in quick succession. Children in out of area placements often have a form of attachment disorder, and frequent disruption of relationships can create additional vulnerability*.'[102]

178. It was agreed in written evidence and in roundtables that it is vital that the emotional impact of placing a child in a new area is taken into account before the decision to move them is made. These placements should only be made when they are truly in the best interests of the child.

[98] Decision maker roundtable
[99] NICE, 2016. *Children's attachment.* Available at: https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs133/chapter/Introduction
[100] Written evidence 25
[101] The Children's Commissioner, 2019. *Stability Index.* Available at: https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/cco-stability-index-2019.pdf
[102] Written evidence 42

179. It was mentioned that the current guidance on care planning and placements[103] states that the decision to place a child outside of the local area with responsibility for them must not be put into effect before a nominated officer approves that the responsible local authority has produced a placement plan.

180. The placement plan should set out,[104] how the placement will contribute towards meeting the child's needs and ensure that the child's wishes and feelings have been ascertained and given due consideration before any decisions are made.

181. However, evidence from children and young people with experience of being in care, and professionals working with them, found that in practice all too often this is not happening. It was found that frequently decisions to move children out of area are not made with their best interests in mind, driven by lack of availability and choice. '*We believe that out of area placements are often made because there is a lack of appropriate resources or due to regulatory pressures, rather than because it is in the best interest of the child*.'[105]

182. Furthermore, evidence from both young people and professionals suggested that in some instances children are moved without consent, with local authorities citing a best interest's decision to circumvent taking the child's wishes into account. '*Decisions to place a child outside their own area can often be justified as being in the child's best interests, so they do not have to agree to the move'*.[106]

183. There was consensus that there are some situations in which placing a child out of area could be in their best interest, for example one young person told us:

'If the young person is in shit then or they have got caught up with the wrong people then maybe yes […] It is also a fair consideration if there are abusive parents and there is a high chance you will see them out and about in your area.'

184. Yet, young people also felt strongly that safeguarding concerns can not always justify the decision to place a child out of area.

185. 'Safeguarding is often used as a reason. I feel this can sometimes be bullshit. For example if someone says they are going to stab you then the Local authority will want to move you but it doesn't mean that it will happen. Maybe in this circumstance the words bullying should be used rather than safeguarding.' (Young person)

186. It was clear from the evidence, that there is widespread misconception that placing children in rural settings makes them safer. We know that children and young people can be targeted for exploitation through means other than face-to-face interaction such as through social media and other platforms[107]. However, throughout the inquiry it was made clear that the changing nature of risk and exploitation is not taken into account when placement decisions are made. '*In recent years, professionals worked on the assumption that exploitative networks did not exist in rural areas, hence this was a safe place for these young people to live. This has changed with the growing knowledge about county lines; as it spreads across the country, no areas are completely safe from Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)*'.[108]

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[103] The Department for Education, 2010. *Care Planning, Placement and Case Review*. Available at: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/959/part/3/crossheading/placement-out-of-area/made
[104] The Department for Education, 2010. *Care Planning, Placement and Case Review*. Available at: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/959/regulation/9/made
[105] Written evidence 69
[106] Written evidence 69
[107] Turner, A. Belcher, B. Pona, I., 2019. *Counting Lives.* The Children's Society. Available at: https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/counting-lives-report.pdf
[108] Written evidence 69

Section Four - Service responses following incidents of children and young people missing from out of area placements

187. Children placed out of area may not receive the same level of care and response as those looked after children placed within their home local authority boundaries. This may be due to different data-sharing practices and thresholds around intervention in other areas. The following section will take a look at the way in which agencies with responsibility for looked after children put safeguards in place for them when they are placed out of area and the ways in which they respond when these children go missing.

Information sharing before the child goes missing

188. Some children and young people are placed not only in a new local authority area but within the boundaries of a new police force as well.

189. In some instances this poses multiple difficulties as police forces may not receive all the necessary information about a young person from the new local authority to appropriately safeguard them. Different police forces do not routinely share information about children and young people at risk of going missing and therefore, the new police force may not be made aware of information about a young person placed in their area that could be vital to keep them safe both before and after they go missing.

190. As mentioned previously, when placing a looked after child in a new area local authorities have a duty to notify the host local authority of the placement.[109] However, we heard that in practice, often this is not happening. '*Children are placed without information sharing (a handover of awareness), I believe there is a statutory requirement for placing authorities to inform the placement authority of the child's accommodation in their area. This is rarely if at all completed. When it is, our local authority do not share this with police, so the children appear without any history or footprint*.'[110]

191. Currently guidance does not require the local authority to also notify the relevant police force when they place a child in their area and we received evidence to suggest that often police forces are unaware that a looked after child has been placed in their area until a safeguarding issues arises, with 83% (34) of forces that responded reporting on this. '*We are often unaware of their placement until a safeguarding conversation is required and this is generally due to a significant event taking place such as the child being reported missing or they are victim/perpetrator in a crime occurrence*.'[111]

192. This was found to be a barrier to keeping children safe in their new areas with 80% (33) of police forces that responded informing the inquiry that often information and/or intelligence about a young person is not shared with them by the placing local authority. This can result in an intelligence gap which in turn impacts on a forces opportunity to locate the missing young person and inhibit their ability to manage the risks facing them. "*There are times where children are placed out of area by a local authority and information in respect of the risks to this child are not shared with the relevant police force.*"[112]

[109] Department for Education, 2015. *Care planning, placement and case review.* Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/441643/Children_Act_Guidance_2015.pdf
[110] Written evidence 7
[111] IBID
[112] Written evidence 17

193. It was suggested that this can be made worse when children are placed in private children's homes. '*Many of the children who have been placed in the private homes have complex needs and therefore an associated risk of abuse, self-harm or exploitation. It is often the case that the police will only become aware that the child is resident in the policing area when the care home calls for the service of police or the child is reported missing*.'[113]

Trigger plans and risk assessments

194. The police evidence highlighted that although local authorities are statutorily obliged to notify host areas when they place a looked after child in their area, they are not required to provide the host authority with any detailed information about the young person including any trigger and safety plans in case the child goes missing. '*When a child is placed in [area] from another county, the only statutory obligation is for the placing authority to provide the hosting authority with a notification of the child moving into the county. However there is no obligation to provide any background information, trigger plans or safety information*.'[114]

195. The evidence suggested that practice varied, with some police forces reporting that they do receive necessary plans when a child is placed in their area and others reporting that they do not. The police stated that when they are provided with a relevant risk assessment for a young person they are able to put safeguards in place to mitigate the risk, but without access to these plans in advance they are only able to work reactively once a child has gone missing placing them at increased risk of harm. '*The difficulties are inconsistencies with handovers. Providing you have the relevant risk assessment and the child has an effective risk management plan then you can mitigate the risk. If you do not have such provision this is where difficulties arise*.'[115]

196. The police reported that there are times when they are made aware that a child is being placed in their area but they are only given top line information about them, for example, their level of risk.

197. Whilst having knowledge of a young person's risk level is important for the initial risk assessment made by the police when a child is reported missing,[116] a number of forces voiced the same frustration that providing a risk category without any additional information or a safety plan renders the level of risk meaningless. Without being provided with the appropriate instructions police response teams will not know how to act appropriately if the child goes missing. '*The biggest disconnect we have is that children are frequently labelled as 'High risk CSE' however no trigger plans exist for Agencies response whilst they are missing or when they are located, which makes the label meaningless*."[117]

198. Concerns were raised that all these issues could be further complicated if the child is moved onto a third area. '*The biggest disconnect we have is that children are frequently labelled as "high risk CSE", however no trigger plans exist for agencies' response whilst they are missing or when they are located, which makes the label meaningless*.' [118]

[113] Written evidence 33
[114] Written evidence 20
[115] Written evidence 37
[116] APPG on runaway and missing children and adults, 2016. *Inquiry into safeguarding 'absent' children.* Available at: https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/appg-absent-inquiry-final-report-may-2016.pdf
[117] Written evidence 7
[118] Written evidence 7

199. Police forces raised concerns with the fact that there are no mechanisms by which different police forces can record and share information about vulnerable young people in a consistent way.

Return Home Interviews (RHIs)

200. In England, children and young people who go missing from home or care are statutorily entitled to an offer of a return home interview (RHI) upon their return.[119] A RHI is an important tool that can help identify and deal with any harm that the young person has suffered either prior to or during their missing episode. It should help the young person understand address the reasons why they went missing and be used as a way to offer the young person appropriate help and support.

201. The interview should be carried out within 72 hours of the child returning from their missing episode and should be carried out by someone independent to their care.[120]

202. Providing a RHI can help build intelligence around exploitation and other risks. Information and intelligence from them should be used by the police and local authorities to disrupt patterns of exploitation and other problematic issues in a young person's life.

203. It is the placing local authority's duty to ensure that their looked after children receive an offer of a RHI. Hosting local authorities are not required to offer RHIs to looked after children placed out of area and we heard that whilst some do offer this service anyway, many do not. '*Some host local authorities conduct RHI's on behalf of a placing authority but most don't. If the latter is the case, then the RHI's in reality don't take place*.'[121]

204. Recent research found that looked after children placed out of area are less likely to receive an offer of a RHI than young people placed in area, (78% and 82% respectively).[122] This was echoed in the written responses we received from both professionals and the police. It was made clear that young people placed out of area are not afforded the same response when they go missing, and are often not receiving RHIs, meaning that their risks are not understood. '*In addition there are inconsistencies within [area] in providing independent return home interviews (IRHI) for out of borough looked after children. Independent return home interview data is very positive within [area], however these inconsistencies result in often the most vulnerable children not receiving this crucial safeguarding and information sharing provision*.'[123]

205. We heard that varied practice between local authorities regarding conducting and commissioning RHIs was acting as a barrier to children and young people in out of area placements receiving them in a timely way and by appropriate individuals.

206. Some local authorities prefer to use their own staff to conduct RHIs for all their looked after children who go missing irrespective of where they are placed. However, we heard that the distance they are placed from their home local authority can affect the chances of them receiving a RHI within the statutory timescale. We heard that the distance can also stop the RHI happening all together as social workers are unable to travel long distances to conduct them.

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[119] Department for Education, 2014. *Statutory guidance on children who runaway or go missing from home or care*. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/307867/Statutory_Guidance_-_Missing_from_care__3_.pdf

[120] IBID

[121] Written evidence 39

[122] Pona, I. Raws, P. & Chetwynd, H., 2019. The First Step. *The Children's Society.* Available at: https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/the-first-step.pdf

[123] Written evidence 30

207. The same was true for those local authorities who chose to use independent services to carry out their RHIs. '*Children placed further afield are less likely to receive a missing from home interview. There appear to be different arrangements for facilitating these. Some local authorities insist on undertaking these directly and the distance involved is a barrier in enabling these to be carried out by the placing local authority within statutory timescales. However, there are some local authorities that will commission independent experts located close to the child's placement to undertake missing from home interviews. Where there is a need to place children further afield, we believe that missing from home interviews could be more readily facilitated if local authorities were more open to accessing local services that offer this service*.' [124]

208. In some instances the placing local authorities will spot purchase a RHI service from the host local authority. However, we heard that this practice is inconsistent.

209. Furthermore, although the responsibility to provide RHIs does not fall on the host local authority, in some instances they will offer looked after children placed in their area a RHI irrespective of this. Frustratingly one police force told us that despite this service being available in their local area, some responsible local authorities decline the offer but then fail to complete the RHI themselves or share relevant information form the interview with the relevant police force. '*We do struggle sometimes when the placing LA decline [independent provider] offer to complete the RHI but then fail to complete or share the details of their return home process*.'[125]

210. There are a number of barriers that mean young people in out of area placements are less likely to receive RHIs. In a recent report by The Children's Society[126] the most pressing issue was found to be the responsible local authority not receiving notification of the missing episode from the host authority or police force.

211. Furthermore, it is likely that many of the factors identified by The Children's Society[127] as being important to increase the uptake of RHIs – such as RHIs being delivered by known and trusted professionals who have developed a relationship with the young person and are able to conduct the interview in a child-centred way – will be affected by a child being placed in an out of area placement. These issues will be exacerbated by frequent placement moves.

Information sharing from RHIs

212. We also heard evidence of out of area placements disrupting how information from RHIs is shared with relevant agencies. '*When a child returns from being a missing from home, there should be a return interview offered / completed by the local authority. Due to the distances between the private care home and the placing authority the required return interviews are irregular, inconsistent and if intelligence is gained, it is seldom shared with North Yorkshire Police, again creating an intelligence gap and potential risk*.'[128]

213. During the professional round table one local authority representative told us that even when they take an active interest in the safeguarding of children placed in their areas by other local authorities they experience a varied response when it comes to information sharing from RHIs. '*We feel that although the children aren't our responsibility they are in our area. If they are coming to our attention we will be asking what is going on, responses from home LAs is varied. Particularity around RHIs and*

[124] Written evidence 71
[125] Written evidence 39
[126] IBID
[127] IBID
[128] Written evidence 33

when there is a risk of exploitation – they are reluctant to share risk assessments with us and with the police.'[129]

Solutions discussed

214. Solutions discussed in written evidence and roundtable focussed on how different agencies can better communicate and work together to improve safeguarding response to looked after children going missing from out of area placements. Information sharing was one of the areas identified where changes are needed.

215. One solution to the issue of information sharing about looked after children vulnerable to going missing is the introduction of the Philomena Protocol. Durham police force were the first to adopt the Philomena Protocol which is used to assist information sharing between children's homes and other agencies with the police to protect children living in children's homes in the area.

> **Philomena Protocol –** The Philomena Protocol was introduced by Durham Police across the force area and is an interactive electronic form that applies to young people in children's homes who are at risk of going missing.
>
> The protocol requires staff with caring responsibilities to carefully and sensitively gather and upload relevant information, such as places a young person frequently visits and up to date photographs, so that they can risk assess and work with the young person to prevent them from going missing. It also enables staff at the home to work in partnership with the police to trace the young people as quickly as possible if they do go missing.

216. The need to create a national database or IT platform for police forces to use across boarders was suggested to be the only solution to the challenges that police forces experience in communication about children placed out of area at risk of going missing. '*Our collective view is there will always be challenges in communicating across borders and boroughs despite our very best efforts to make this a smooth transition. From a police perspective forces work from different platforms in terms of IT and protocols with partner agencies. When you add in the complexity of managing a child who may be located some distance from the host authority this adds another layer into already complex issues*.'[130] Whilst the Government made a commitment to creating such a data base in 2017[131], progress has been slow.

217. Listening to children through return home interviews and acting on their concerns and wishes and feelings was also raised as a solution and an area that requires improvement. Ensuring opportunities for children to speak to someone other than care staff or social worker about the reasons for running away and improving communication between the host and placing local authority about relevant safeguarding concerns identified in RHI were advised by contributors to this inquiry.

[129] Decision maker roundtable
[130] Written evidence 44
[131] HM Government, 2017. *Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation, Progress Report*. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/592589/Tackling_Child_Sexual_Exploitation_-_Progress_Report__print_.pdf

Conclusions and recommendations

218. Disrupting risks in a child's life is one of the key purposes of children being taken into care. Whether these risks are due to domestic violence, abuse or neglect at home or due to a child being exploited by people outside the child's family, taking a child into care is meant to make things better and keep children safe.

219. We heard through this inquiry that when children are placed in care placements outside their home areas the risks they face are not always disrupted but instead are displaced or heightened when a child goes missing as children are more likely to travel longer distances when they go missing and encounter more strangers on their journeys. With the presence of social media in children's lives the people who groom children in their home areas are never far away in terms of contact. As concerns are growing around looked after children being exploited criminally by county line criminal groups, professionals are worried that out of area placements may actually make it easier for children to be exploited.

220. The number of children placed out of area is growing and it is an issue of concern. The inquiry heard that more and more children are also being placed out of area in semi-supported accommodation not registered, regulated or inspected by Ofsted and concerns about the vulnerability and safety of these young people were raised by a whole host of professionals and the police.

221. Looked after children who have had experiences of being placed outside their local areas told the inquiry how their lives were disrupted when they were moved to live outside their home areas. They lost contact with their families and friends, were often moved without any preparation or prior notice of the placement. They told us how that disruption has caused them to go missing, trying to get back to their familiar surroundings or going missing as a result of meeting other young people in those placements who were also at risk. Sadly, their accounts show that children's wishes and feelings are very seldom central to how decisions are made about out of area placements, how the moves happened and how children are listened to when they came back from missing episodes.

222. When asked what could be done to make moving and living in out of area placements better one young person said:

    'Let them see their friends and family and let them have free time and if they tell you they are not happy move them. Because it's a horrible feeling being somewhere you don't want to be and have to start working for everything again'.

223. Whilst it may be the right decision for some young people to be placed in out of area placements, the evidence received by this inquiry suggests that many children are placed outside their home areas because there are not a sufficient number of local placements or placements that can meet their needs. Decisions where to place a child are still, in many instances, driven by where placements are available rather than the needs of the child. The evidence shows that the number of care placements in children's homes and, most worryingly, in semi-supported unregulated accommodation has grown dramatically in recent years. As has the number of missing incidents from those types of placements.

224. Whilst for some young people placements outside their home area offer the quality of support they need, the question remains why the same support could not have been provided in their home area. Some of the examples of good practice shared with the inquiry demonstrated how local authorities make high quality protective and therapeutic provision available within their areas for children who would have been previously placed outside their area. These placements achieve positive outcomes for children locally and reduce the number of children who the local authority places

outside the area. Sadly these examples of targeted activities to reduce the number of out of area placements are scarce.

225. Urgent action is needed from national and local government. The first priority should be to significantly reduce the number of children in out of area placements, including placements in unregulated settings. Professionals and decision makers we talked to through this inquiry were in strong agreement that a national action plan led by the Department for Education is needed, backed up with appropriate funding, to help local authorities plan sufficient number of local placements to meet the ever increasing complexity of needs of children in care and to recognise that placements out of area are no longer keeping children safe.

226. Tackling the use of unregulated accommodation for vulnerable children has to become one of the key tasks of that national action plan. There was a clear consensus that accommodation for vulnerable children should be always regulated and inspected.

227. Another priority should be to make out of their area placements that would still need to happen for some children– safe and positive. We need to put children's wishes and feelings, their safety and wellbeing at the centre of decision making and of support they receive and enable professionals in police and children's services to safeguard them properly across the borders.

228. For that to happen local authorities should be more accountable for how they plan individual placements, how they communicate to children about moves, how they help young people maintain protective contacts in their home area. They also need to ensure that there is a designated return home interview services for children in out of area placements to help understand the issues when children are running away and liaise with agencies in both areas to keep children safe. And the system of notifications between placing and receiving local authorities and placing local authority and host police need to improve so that risks in child's life are disrupted and not merely ignored or displaced.

Recommendations

Provision of good quality care placements where they are needed

1. The Department for Education should develop an Emergency Action Plan to significantly reduce the number of out of area placements. The Government must take responsibility for ensuring that there are sufficient local placements to meet the needs of looked after children.
   The plan should address the supply and the distribution of children's homes nationally, and the use of unregulated semi-independent provision. It should be backed by funding.

2. The Department for Education should produce best practice guidelines on what a good sufficiency strategy should look like. They must follow up and ensure that all local authorities have updated their strategies.

3. Local authorities should produce up to date assessments of available and required number of local placements for their looked after population to feed into the Emergency Action Plan.

4. The Department for Education should commission research to better understand the cost of different placements by type of provider and complexity and type of support provided to recommend a standard cost of provision.

5. Ofsted should have additional powers to look into financial viability of care providers and around the cost of care, similar to CQC.

6. Ofsted should inspect on the number of children and young people that each children's home refuse to accept.

7. Local authorities should be required to publish sufficiency reports on an annual basis stipulating the number of in and out of area placements and the cost of provision for scrutiny.

8. The Department for Education should collect and publish data on 1) the number of children in out of area placements 2) in placements at a distance, by a) types of placements b) stability of placements, c) age of the child and d) rates of children going missing from those placements.

9. The Government should introduce the national missing persons database to ensure that there is reliable data on the number of children missing and that information is shared promptly across the local authority and police borders when a child goes missing or is found in an area different than their home area.

Addressing the use of unregulated accommodation for children

10. The law must be changed to ensure that unregulated semi-independent supported accommodation for children is regulated and inspected.

Improving safeguarding of children in out of area placements

11. The Department for Education and Home Office should jointly lead the development of a cross-departmental strategy on tackling child criminal exploitation, backed up with changes to relevant statutory guidance, to ensure that professionals working with children are clear about how to respond to child criminal exploitation. The strategy should specifically address the risk of child criminal exploitation, including through the County Lines model, to looked after children in out of area placements.

12. The same rules that currently apply to children's home around risk assessment of suitability of location, statement of purpose, information shared about the location with police should apply to all currently unregulated accommodation where children are placed. A standard registration and regulatory process for semi-independent accommodation where children under the age of 18 are housed should be introduced.

13. Good practice guidance on how to support children in out of area placements should be cascaded and rolled out, this should include information on supporting children and young people to maintain contact with their family and friends as well as information on providing opportunities for young people to learn new skills about keeping themselves safe in their new area and in developing healthy relationships.

14. Notification procedure about children being placed out of area should include information about a risk of a child going missing and a safety plan to address that risk. These plans should be shared with the host local authority as well as with the host police force. The notifications should also include the name of professionals in the responsible and host local authorities who will be the point of contact for the police if a child goes missing from out of area placement.

15. On placing a child outside the child's home area the placing authority should stipulate the named provider of independent return home interviews in case a child goes missing.

Child-centred decision making

16. A new requirement should be placed on children's services to provide evidence that children and young people have been consulted and informed in advance and supported to prepare for any out of area moves. Contact with family and friends must be supported and planned for.

17. Every out of area placement decision must be supported by evidence to demonstrate that the decision to place a child at a distance is will keep that child safe and will meet their long term needs and stipulate the reasons for out of area placement.

Appendix one

Local Authorities

Written evidence 1 - Durham Local Authority

Written evidence 2 – Enfield Local Authority

Written evidence 3 – Kent County Council

Written evidence 4 – Milton Keynes Local Authority

Written evidence 5 – Staffordshire Local Authority

Written evidence 6 – Wigan Local Authority

Police forces

Written evidence 7 – Avon and Somerset Constabulary

Written evidence 8 - Bedfordshire Police

Written evidence 9 - Cambridge Constabulary

Written evidence 10 – Cheshire Police

Written evidence 11 – City of London Police

Written evidence 12 – Cleveland Police

Written evidence 13 – Cumbria Constabulary

Written evidence 14 – Derbyshire Constabulary

Written evidence 15 – Devon and Cornwall Police

Written evidence 16 – Dyfed-Powys Police

Written evidence 17 – Dorset Police

Written evidence 18 – Durham Constabulary

Written evidence 19 – Essex Police

Written evidence 20 – Gloucestershire Constabulary

Written evidence 21 – Greater Manchester Police

Written evidence 22 – Gwent Police

Written evidence 23 – Hampshire Constabulary

Written evidence 24 – Hertfordshire Constabulary

Written evidence 25 – Humberside Police

Written evidence 26 – Kent Police

Written evidence 27 – Lancashire Constabulary

Written evidence 28 – Leicestershire Police

Written evidence 29 - Lincolnshire Police

Written evidence 30 – Merseyside Police

Written evidence 31 – Metropolitan Police Service

Written evidence 32 – Norfolk Constabulary

Written evidence 33 – North Yorkshire Police

Written evidence 34 – Northamptonshire Police

Written evidence 35 - North Wales Police

Written evidence 36 – Nottinghamshire Police

Written evidence 37 – South Yorkshire Police

Written evidence 38 – South Wales Police

Written evidence 39 – Staffordshire Police

Written evidence 40 – Surrey Police

Written evidence 41 – Sussex Police

Written evidence 42 – Thames Valley Police

Written evidence 43 – Warwickshire Police

Written evidence 44 – Warwickshire Police

Written evidence 45 – West Mercia Police

Written evidence 46 – West Midlands Police

Written evidence 47 – West Yorkshire

Written evidence 48 – Wiltshire Police

Professionals

Written evidence 49 - Association of Directors of Children's Services

Written evidence 50 - Become

Written evidence 51 - Catch22

Written evidence 52 – ECPAT UK

Written evidence 53 - English Coalition of Runaway and Missing Children

Written evidence 54 - Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

Written evidence 55 - Independent Children's Homes Association

Written evidence 65 - Local Government Association

Written evidence 66 - Missing People

Written evidence 67 - NYAS (National Youth Advocacy Service)

Written evidence 68 - Ofsted

Written evidence 69 - St Christopher's

Written evidence 70 - The Children's Society

Written evidence 71 - The Fostering Network

Written evidence 72 - The Howard League

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