APPG on Young Runaways and Missing Children and Adults

Progress report on changes in responses to missing children following the Joint APPG Inquiry into children missing from care (2012) and the APPG inquiry into safeguarding of absent children (2016).

March 2019

1. Introduction

Children in care are amongst the most vulnerable in our society and are often vulnerable to being groomed for sexual and, increasingly, criminal exploitation. 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[1] and many go missing repeatedly.

As the population of children in care grows year on year so do the number of children who go missing from care placements. It is crutial that agencies' understanding of, and response to vulnerable children who go missing from care is of a good standard.

In 2012 the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Runaway and Missing Children and Adults and the APPG for Looked after Children and Care Leavers, conducted a joint inquiry into the safeguarding of children who go missing from care. The APPGs took evidence from children who have run away from care, ministers, national agencies such as the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Agency (CEOP) and Ofsted, the voluntary sector, police forces and local authorities. The inquiry highlighted that the system for responding to children missing from care was not fit for purpose and that many vulnerable children who went missing from care were failed by the very professionals whose job it was to safeguard them.

In 2016 the APPG on Runaway and Missing Children and Adults conducted another inquiry into safeguarding of children reported to the police as missing who were categorised by the police as 'absent' and therefore considered to be at 'no apparent risk'. The inquiry showed that the classification of 'absent' was not keeping children safe. It also raised concerns that many children missing from care, including from out of area placements[2], were categorised as 'absent' and were slipping under the radar of professionals until the situation in their lives reached crisis point.

Both inquiries presented evidence on the areas where changes were needed and made recommendations. This paper outlines key areas where changes were recommended by the APPG on Runaway and Missing Children and Adults and reviews changes in national policies relevant to those areas.

2. Key issues identified by the inquiries

Lack of understanding of the frequency with which children go missing from care

The 2012 inquiry highlighted gaps in agencies understanding of the full picture about children going missing from care. The inquiries heard from witnesses that the scale of children going missing from care was not known due to failures in how data was collected and shared by police, local authorities and the Department for Education. The children's minister at the time of the 2012 inquiry admitted that it was impossible to know the true extent of the problem as the data collected by police, care services and Ofsted was "raw and erratic".[3]

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[1] The Children's Society (2011), *Make Runaways Safe*

[2] There are two types of out of area care placements as described the statutory guidance on Children Act 1989:

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

We are interested in the risks associated with both types of placement and therefore throughout this document we will not make a distinction between the two. We will just use the term 'out of area placement'.

[3] Tim Loughton, Children and Families Minister, *Oral evidence session* 4.1, p. 8

Indeed, the Department for Education (DfE) recorded only 930 instances of children going missing from care in the year prior to inquiry (2011), whilst police data showed an estimated 10,000 individual children going missing from care in the year.[4]

The data discrepancy between police recorded data on missing children and that reported by local authorities remained an issue of concern at the time of 2016 inquiry - in 2014-15 the DfE statistical release reported that 6,110 looked after children went missing 28,570 times. During the same period of time the National Crime Agency (NCA) data, based on responses from just 22 out of 43 forces showed that, 12,780 individual children were reported missing from care with 35,147 incidents.

The inquiries also highlighted serious flaws with how information about children in care was shared at the local level (e.g. 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 (e.g. the system of notification between local authorities when a child is placed out of area often is not working).

Poor information sharing undermined not only the understanding of the full extent of children going missing from care, but also the risk assessments of individual children at the time they were reported as missing to the police, resulting in children being wrongly categorised as absent and not receiving response from services until their situation reached crisis point. Use of the 'absent' category in relation to children in out of area placements was seen as particularly problematic as these children were not recorded on the same systems as 'missing' children and local authorities were often not notified that the child had been reported missing to the police.

Poor quality or inadequate support for young people missing from care

Examples of good practice and how the care system could often make a positive difference to children who had been neglected by their parents were shared with the inquiries. However, the 2012 inquiry also heard that too many older children were placed in poor quality and unsuitable care placements. Children in residential care homes were mostly older children, often extremely vulnerable and with complex needs. These children required high quality support and therapeutic care. Yet the variable – and often poor – quality of some children's homes and other care placements was identified as a major issue by many of the submissions to the 2012 inquiry. The lack of availability of good quality care was also highlighted, with one witness revealing that she had concerns that children were being placed *"where there was a bed free, not where would be most suitable".*[5]

Decisions to place a child out of area was not always based on the best interests of the child

Nearly a third of all children in care – and 46% of children in children's homes – were placed outside of their local area at the time of 2012 inquiry. The inquiry found that this indicated serious breaches by local authorities with regard to their 'sufficiency duties' and happened despite evidence showing being placed a long way from family and friends was often a factor in causing young people to run away.

At the time of 2012 inquiry, nearly half of the 4,840 looked after children living in children's homes and hostels or secure accommodation were living in children's homes outside their local authority and 91% of these were placed in private or voluntary provision. This was despite local authorities' duty to ensure sufficient provision of homes in their area. Children placed in

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[4] UK Missing Persons Bureau (2012) *Children Missing from Care,* NPIA
[5] Elise Noblet, The Children's Society, *Oral evidence session* 3, p. 30 2012 Inquiry

residential children's homes were particularly vulnerable - many of them had had multiple placements or might have been placed there due to a placement breakdown.[6]

Children should only be placed outside of the local authority if it is in their best interests, however, the inquiry found that placement decisions could be based on economic reasons, rather than on what was in the best interests of the child. Local authorities were often unaware if a child in their care but placed in another local authority had gone missing due to lack of notifications between 'placing' and 'host' authorities. This significantly reduces not only a local authority's ability to perform a comprehensive local risk analysis and plan resources effectively, but also severely limits its ability to carry out its safeguarding duties to all children living within its boundary.

Witnesses also spoke of how children's homes were often seen by social workers and other professionals as a 'last resort' for troubled young people with many placements behind them. The high turnover and low training and skill levels of some staff in children's homes were also raised with the inquiry. One practitioner told the inquiry "*You can have someone looking after a young person, who the day before their experience may have been working at a deli counter in ASDA".[7]*

Children's homes in England, the 2012 inquiry heard, were failing to protect children who go missing. This was despite spending £1billion a year[8] on just under 5,000 children cared for in children's homes averaging £200,000 per child.[9]

Agencies and professionals' responses to children going missing from care were often negative

The role of Ofsted in safeguarding children and young people who run away from care was raised by the police and other agencies as being inadequate. Police pilots of a revised definition of 'missing' and 'absent' were also highlighted to the 2012 inquiry as having particular significance for repeat runaways from care, and some of the evidence seen by the inquiry about these was concerning. The 2016 inquiry reviewed the use of the 'absent' definition, which by then had been implemented across most police forces. The inquiry found evidence that the huge discrepancies in how this definition was implemented in different areas resulted in children not being properly safeguarded when they went missing.

Both children and professionals also told the 2012 inquiry that not only are the systems not working, professionals were failing some children by not picking up the signs of abuse or exploitation. The inquiry heard that some professionals perceived these children as *"troublesome"[10]*, "*promiscuous*"[11] "*criminals"[12]* or indeed, *"slags who knew what they were getting themselves into"* – rather than extremely vulnerable young people in need of support.[13]

Trafficked children going missing from care were often failed by local authorities

The 2012 inquiry identified that trafficked children from abroad were being particularly let down and their needs ignored because the authorities viewed child trafficking as an immigration control issue. Most child victims went missing within one week of being in care, many within 48 hours and often before being registered with children's services. Of the trafficked children

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[6] DfE (March 2012) *Children's Homes in England Data Pack,* London: HM Government
[7] Alison McCausland MBE, *Oral evidence session 2* p.18
[8] House of Commons Written Answer 77679, 3 November 2011
[9] Department for Education (2012), Children's Homes in England Data Pack
[10] Sue Berelowitz, Deputy Children's Commissioner, *Oral evidence 3,* p.12
[11] Ibid, p.12
[12] ECPAT UK, *Written evidence submission*, p.8
[13] Practitioner who works with young people at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (anonymised), *Written evidence submission,* p.1

that made it into local authority care, almost two thirds of those who went missing were never found.

3. Key recommendations from the 2012 and 2016 APPG inquiries

The 2012 and 2016 inquiries made a number of recommendations in relation to improving safeguarding of children missing from care including:

2012

- Urgent action needed on "out of area placements", to reduce the number of children in care living outside their own local authority.
- Ofsted should not be allowed to give a 'good' inspection report where a home has had hundreds of missing incidents. More weighting should also be given to the management of missing incidents in Ofsted's inspections.
- A completely new system of reporting incidents of children going missing from care needed, which combines data from both the police and local authorities.
- Barriers which stop the police from being informed of the names and addresses of all children's homes in their area need to be removed.

2016

- Ensure independent return interviews are offered and provided to missing children after each missing episode
- Scrapping the 'absent' category for children reported as missing to the police
- Improvements needed in risk assessments at the time of a child being reported as missing to the police, based on relevant information from police and children's services

The full list of relevant recommendations with indication of progress made in relation to these recommendations is provided in Appendix A.

In a written statement[14] the then Minister for Education, welcomed the 2012 APPG report and committed to establishing a task and finish group to help ensure that young people are placed in children's homes nearer to their local area. The group were to make recommendations by the following September on strengthening the regulations around the use of out-of-area placements. Further to this, a commitment was made to develop two expert working group, one which would consider the location and ownership of children's homes and local authority commissioning practices and arrangements to drive improvement and another training for social care staff. These three working groups established by the government following the 2012 APPG inquiry led to the number of changes in national policies.

4. Changes since the 2012 and 2016 APPG inquiries

The findings and recommendations from the inquiries led to a number of changes in national policies on looked after children and children missing from care.

4.1.   Data collection about children missing from care

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[14] https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2012-07-03/debates/12070393000014/ChildSexualExploitation?highlight=tim%20loughton#contribution-12070393000050

From 2015, local authorities were expected to report to the DfE as part of their looked after children data set on children missing and absent from care without authorisation. Although there remain concerns around the quality of reporting and discrepancies between police and local authority data, the available data provides a helpful insight on the issue.

The data in Table 1, below, shows the number of children going missing increases year on year. Around half of all missing incidents are from secure units, children's homes and semi-independent living accommodation, followed by missing incidents from foster care placements (around 30%).

Table 1 further shows that despite the percentage of children missing from children's homes decreasing by 9% since 2015, the percentage of children going missing from Childrens homes outside of their local authority area rose year on year (from 34% in 2015 to 41% in 2018). This could, in part, be explained by improved data collection.

This finding suggest an increased risk of going missing for children placed outside of area. The 2012 inquiry heard that too often placement decisions are made based on economic reasons rather than what is in the best interests of the child. Indeed, in 2012 one-quarter of children's homes were situated in the North West of England where 17% of all looked after children are from. Furthermore only 5% of children's homes were situated in London where 15% of the looked after children population are from[15][16]. These patterns has been relatively consistent since 2012 with only very slight changes over the 7 years[17].[18].

Table 1. Number of children missing from care and number of missing incidents from 2015 to 2018

	2015	*2016*	*2017*	*2018*
Children looked after during the year	99,410	100,910	102,660	104,100
Children who had a missing incident during the year	6,130	8,660	10,720	11,530
Percentage of whom had a missing incident during the year	6%	9%	10%	11%
Children who went missing more than once during the year	3,600	5,200	6,670	7,460
Percentage of missing children who went missing more than once	59%	60%	62%	65%
Missing incidents during the year	28,700	42,890	60,870	70,250
Average number of missing incidents per looked after child who went missing	4.7	5.0	5.7	6.1
Placements from which children went missing				
Number of missing incidents from secure units, children's homes and semi-independent living accommodation	14,930	21,930	30,530	34,060
Percentage of missing incidents from secure Units, children's homes	52%	51%	50%	48%

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[15] Children's social care providers and places November 2012.zip

[16] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption

[17] ibid

[18] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-social-care-data-in-england-2018/childrens-social-care-data-in-england-2017-to-2018-main-findings

and semi-independent living accommodation out of all missing incidents				
Number of missing incidents from foster placements	9,530	15,100	19,720	20,690
Percentage of missing incidents from foster placements out of all missing incidents	33%	35%	32%	29%
Number of missing incidents in relation to children living independently	2,960	4,530	8,620	12,860
Percentage of missing incidents for children living independently out of all missing incidents	10%	11%	14%	18%
Children who went missing from residential children's homes				
Number of missing incidents from Childrens homes *	13,040	17,910	23,940	25,640
*Percentage of missing incidents from children's homes out of all missing incidents ***	45%	42%	39%	36%
Number of missing incidents from children's homes for children placed inside local authority boundary *	8,650	11,210	14,530	15,150
*Percentage of missing incidents from children's homes for children placed inside local authority boundary ***	66%	63%	61%	59%
Number of missing incidents from children's homes for children placed outside local authority boundary *	4,390	6,700	9,410	10,490
*Percentage of missing incidents from children's homes for children placed outside local authority boundary ***	34%	37%	39%	41%

Source: Children looked after in England including adoption: 2017 to 2018'
https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-looked-after-children

* Source: Answer to written question by Ann Coffey dated December 2018
https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-12-03/198236/

The official published statistics do not include information on how many children go missing from out of area placements. Additional information included in response to a parliamentary question from Ann Coffey, MP[19] showed that in 2016/17 around 12,000 missing episodes were from placements 20 miles or more from their home address (Table 2). The APPG's own inquiry into safeguarding 'absent' children in 2016 showed that the number of missing episodes from

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[19] https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-27/134364

out of area placements is likely to be high. This is also evidenced by The Children's Society 'Making Connections' report[20].

Table 2. Missing incidents by distance of placements

	2015	2016	2017
Total number of missing episodes	**28,710**	**43,000**	**60,720**
20 miles or less	18,720	31,220	44,340
Over 20 miles	5,460	8,100	12,200
Not Known or not recorded	4,530	3,680	4,180

Evidence shows that being placed a long way from family and friends is often a factor in causing children to run away.[10] These children are also more likely to be targeted for sexual exploitation as highlighted in different cases across the country. The 2012 inquiry into children who go missing from care found that perpetrators target children's homes specifically because of the high vulnerability of the children placed there and how easily they could make contact with the children.

Revised statutory guidance on children missing from home or care came into force in January 2014.

The revised guidance introduced a number of changes and placed requirements on local authorities to improve responses to children missing from care:

- Changed the definition of missing child. Previously local authorities collated data (albeit badly) only on children missing for 24 hours or more. In the new definition, the 24-hour limit was removed in recognition that children could be at risk of significant harm even if they went missing for a short period, and frequent/ repeated episodes of going missing might be an indicator of problems in child's life, (CSE or grooming). Local authorities are now expected to collect data on the numbers of children reported as missing to the police and on children who have been 'absent without authorisation' where the decision was made not to report a child to the police as missing.

  The guidance refers to what was at the time a new police definitions of 'missing' and 'absent' adopted by the police from 1 April 2013. Police classified cases as 'missing' when the cases were assessed as higher risk, such as when a person's whereabouts could not be established, if their absence was out of character, or if they were thought to be at risk of harm. 'Absent' was intended for supposedly less serious cases of when a person was not where they were expected to be. Theses definitions of 'missing' and 'absent' changed in 2017 following 2016 inquiry into absent children but the statutory guidance has not been updated since 2014.

- Required that Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCBs) (together with local authorities) should lead and co-ordinate the development of local multi-agency protocols and procedures on missing and absent children, request and review all the relevant data regularly to identify children who need help early, agree risk assessments and oversee that the same understanding of definitions, risks etc. is shared among all local agencies with responsibility for child protection and that data is shared adequately.

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[20] https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/making-connections-how-local-agencies-can-keep-missing-children-safe.pdf

- Required that local authorities should provide return interviews to missing and absent children and highlight situations (e.g. frequent missing or absent episodes) when additional action should be taken.

- Contained a section on care planning stressing the importance of including information about risks of missing and safety planning in a child's care plan.

Ofsted sharing data with the police

The government changed the regulations to allow Ofsted to share data about the location of children's home with the police. In came into force in April 2014.

Review of qualifications needed to work with looked after children has taken place and changes introduced

The support and quality of the workforce in children's homes can be critical to a young person's experience and their likelihood of running away, particularly as these young people are likely to be more vulnerable and have multiple placements. Some young people fall in to patterns of going missing when they meet people who show them the attention that they crave, but have not received from their care staff.

The variable quality of staff in children's homes working with very vulnerable children was a concerning issue identified by the inquiry. The workforce development and academic standard of the residential care workforce in England is much lower than in other European counties. Poor levels of training for staff are also exacerbated by the lack of staff consistency in children's homes due to low staff pay and an over reliance on agency workers. More specific training of children's home staff is needed in areas where young people are being targeted for sexual exploitation and might be at risk of running away.

The Government changed children's homes regulations to ensure that achieving a relevant level 3 qualification should be regarded as the minimum expectation of children's home staff. Since January 2015, it has been a requirement for staff working in children's homes in England to register, and within two years obtain, this qualification. The 2015 DfE census of the children's home workforce found that over nine in ten staff (excluding registered managers) either held a Level 3 qualification, or were working towards the diploma.

The government intended to introduce a more systematic data collection and analysis about the children's homes workforce (skills and qualifications, turnover, motivations, age, ethnicity etc.) to inform future policy. A report on the census of children's homes workforce was published in January 2015[21]. But it appears that the census was one off rather than annual.

In 2015, the Government commissioned the Narey review of residential care[22] the outcomes of which were published in 2016. The review concluded that the attitudes and behaviours of workers are more important than formal qualifications and that the current Level 3 Diploma for residential care workers is an appropriate qualification for workers in residential care and it is not necessary to create a graduate workforce for these roles. It also recommended that workers and managers of residential homes need to be clear about the powers that they have to manage behaviour and keep young people safe, including managing the risks associated

[21]
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/391529/RR437_-_Children_s_homes_workforce_census_.pdf
[22] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-residential-care-in-england

with leaving the home and going missing. The use of locked doors and restraint, where required, should form part of a restorative approach to behaviour.

Changes around out of area placements

The Childrens and Family 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[23]. 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.

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.

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 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.

Although decision making processes and notification processes around children's homes changed this did not result in reduction of numbers of children placed out of area. As the data below in Table 3, shows, between 2012 and 2018 the number of placements out of area, calculated out of the total number of placements in that category, increased across the three types of placements that report higher number of missing incidents. With numbers of children placed in children's homes, secure units and supported accommodation outside children's home areas increasing more than in other categories. More of these placements are also reported to be at a distance 20 miles or more.

Table 3. 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 *(of them in children's homes)*
2011/12	67050	50260	2430	5930 *(4890)*
2017/18	75420	55200	3100	8530 *(6370)*

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[23]

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/441643/Children_Act_Guidance_2015.pdf

% increase	12%		10%		32%		44% (30%)	
	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 (2640)	2730 (2250)
% of total in this category	60%	35%	64%	36%	70%	30%	54% (54%)	46% (46%)
2017/18	44450	30670	34160	21040	1910	1190	3510 (2380)	5020 (3990)
% of total in this category	59%	41%	62%	38%	62%	39%	41% (37%)	59% (63%)
Change from 2012 to 2018	**Decrease 1%**	**Increase 6%**	**Decrease 2%**	**Increase 2%**	**Decrease 8%**	**Increase 9%**	**Decrease 13% (17%)**	**Increase 13% (17%)**

Source: DFE Looked after children annual statistical releases.

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% as calculation does not include number of placements where location of placement was not recorded

4.2. Changes related to the commissioning of children's homes

Changes to the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 (as amended), and the Care Standards Act 2000 (Registration) (England) Regulations 2010 require children's homes providers to carry out a risk assessment of the area in partnership with the police and the local authority. Registration by Ofsted could be refused or suspended where the area is deemed unsafe.

DfE indicated that they would work to improve the commissioning and provision of children's homes when responding to the APPG report. However, when responding to the recommendations in the Narey review the government said:

*'In Putting Children First we were clear that we agree with this analysis and committed to using the Children's Social Care Innovation Programme to support local areas to develop commissioning arrangements that could lead to significant savings, wider placement choice and better outcomes for children. We have opened a targeted funding opportunity via the Innovation Programme to test new commissioning arrangements that bring together local authorities and providers to achieve better outcomes and improve the experiences of looked after children. We are welcoming bids which trial the formation of new regional consortia and those that blend the use of residential care with other placements and services to better support children. Within these new commissioning arrangements, we will encourage local authorities to consider using innovative services, including Linkmaker, to match children with the best placement for their needs. Improving commissioning arrangements will allow local authorities and consortia to provide greater stability for providers and ease new entry and expansion into the market. We will also work with the Department for Communities and Local Government to consider how planning practices can support effective local planning for new children's homes. 57. Ultimately, **the implementation of many of Sir Martin's recommendations around commissioning relies on commissioners, providers and***

other local partners taking ownership for improving practice, and increasing dialogue and collaboration between partners on the commissioning and provider side. We expect the Residential Care Leadership Board to play a strong role in engaging with the wider sector to support the development of new approaches and ensure learning and best practice are shared and implemented'.

4.3.   Inspections changes

In 2012 Ofsted strengthened the focus on missing children in its inspections of children's homes as well as in single inspection of child protection and looked after children. Each inspection report now highlights the response to children who go missing from care.

In addition to single inspections, multi-agency inspection of child protection arrangements have been taking place. Joint targeted area inspections (JTAI), are carried out by Ofsted, HMI Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, the Care Quality Commission, and HMI Probation. A number of reports have been published including, 'Time to listen'[24]− a joined up response to child sexual exploitation and missing children which found that despite good progress being made since the 2014 Statutory Guidance, a better understanding of why children go missing and the risks associated was needed,

In September 2016, the JTA inspection report on the response to child sexual exploitation and missing children[25] stated that:

- *There needs to be a better understanding of why children go missing at an individual and a strategic level if agencies are to do more to protect them. Local authorities need to gather all available intelligence to understand why a child has gone missing, including sensitively encouraging children to talk about why they ran away. The current requirement that every child who has been missing should receive a return home interview is not working well enough.*
- *The response to children missing should be based on a proper assessment of all known risks by the police that are appropriately shared with the local authority. Current risk assessments by the police are inconsistent and their effectiveness is limited for some children because episodes of children going missing are sometimes seen in isolation without considering wider vulnerability. This is exacerbated by the inappropriate use of 'absence' as a category for some children who are missing.*

4.4.   Responses to trafficked children

Section 48 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 made provision for Independent Child Trafficking Advocates in England and Wales. The role of ICTAs is to provide specialist independent support for trafficked children, in addition to existing statutory service provision, and to advocate on behalf of the child to ensure that their best interests are reflected in decisions made by public authorities. To support the national rollout of the ICTA service, it was introduced in three early adopter sites: Greater Manchester, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, as well as throughout Wales. This service ran from 30 January 2017. The Modern Slavery Act 2015 also strengthened powers of police and CPS to deal with those who exploit or traffic

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[24]

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/676421/Time_to_listen___a_joined_up_response_to_child_sexual_exploitation_and_missing_children.pdf

[25] ibid

children and adults. The role of ICTAs and other provisions under Modern Slavery Act 2015 have been reviewed recently[26].

The revised ICTA model will provide one-to-one support for children who have no parental responsibility for them in the UK. This includes unaccompanied asylum seeking children. It also introduces for the first time an expert ICTA regional practice co-ordinator. The regional practice co-ordinators will not offer one-to-one support for children, they will work with professionals who are themselves working directly with these children.

Since the APPG report issues emerged with British children including those in care being groomed and trafficked for criminal exploitation.

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[26]

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/788251/Independent_MSA_Review_Interim_Report_3_-_ICTAs__2_.pdf

Appendix A:

Year	Recommendation	No progress	Some progress	Progressed
2012	Guidance should be amended so that all children in care have a statutory right to independent advocacy as part of care reviews and placement planning, not just as part of a complaint process.			■
2012	Before placing a child in another local authority, the home local authority should, in collaboration with the receiving local authority, assess the geographical area to determine whether it is safe for the child based on what is known about the risks facing the child.		■	
2012	The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 should be amended to ensure they adequately meet the needs of children when they go missing. For example, they should require the placing authority to call a placement review meeting whenever they are notified that a child in care has gone missing to assess the level of risk and agree an action plan with the host authority and local police.			■
2012	A weighted scorecard, similar to the one recently introduced for adoption, to be introduced for local authorities to assess their provision for children in care who go missing. This should include performance against sufficiency of accommodation duties, the number of out of area placements and placement stability.	■		
2012	For the government to move away from using the term 'out-of-area placements', which defines a process, to defining 'cross-boundary children in care' as an especially vulnerable sub-group within the wider children in care population and for the Children's Improvement Board to lead on sharing best practice on safeguarding cross-boundary children in care.	■		
2012	For Health and Wellbeing Boards to assess whether the number of available care placements within their area is sufficient to meet the needs of the local		■	

Year	Recommendation			
	population as part of their Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.		(orange)	
2012	LSCBs to request annual statements from local authorities on the number of children from its local authority that are placed 'out of area', the distance from the placement to the 'home' local authority, the type of placements and how many go missing from care. This should include information about unaccompanied migrant children. It should also set out the steps taken to safeguard these groups of children and prevent them going missing, as well as an analysis of return home interviews.		(orange)	
2012	For independent care providers to be required to notify their local area authority of all new cross-boundary placements they receive and when placements end as a means of strengthening the notifications system.		(orange)	
2012	Ofsted's inspection framework should be revised to state that inspectors must always contact the local police for data on missing incidents relating to a children's home as part of their inspection, as well as local schools to ask for information on the number of absences recorded for children living in the home.	(pink)		
2012	Ofsted's inspections should give a greater weighting to children's homes' performance against NMS 5 and 10. These relate to how children's homes effectively manage missing incidents by children in their care, and the risks that an area presents to children placed there.		(orange)	
2012	Urgent action on "out of area placements" to reduce the number of children living outside their own local authority, despite evidence, which shows that this is often a major factor in causing them to run away and putting them at risk.		(orange)	
2012	The Department for Education should take steps to overcome the barriers to Ofsted sharing information on the names and locations of children's homes with local police forces.			(green)
2012	A completely new system of reporting incidents of children going missing from care, which combines data from both the police and local authorities.	(pink)		
2012	Ofsted should not be allowed to give a 'good' inspection report to a home where		(orange)	

	there have been hundreds of missing incidents and more weighting should be given to the management of missing incidents in Ofsted's inspections.		(orange)	
2012	For Police and Crime Commissioners, as part of carrying out their duty to safeguard children in their area, to examine the procedures in places for children missing from care and sharing information with local authorities and LSCBs with regards to organised criminal networks, trafficked and sexually exploited children.		(orange)	
2012	Children's homes, fostering services and local police should draw up joint protocols for the management of individual missing incidents.		(orange)	
2012	The revised Children Who Run Away or Go Missing From Home or Care guidance should state that every child or young person who runs away from care should receive a return interview from a responsible adult the child or young person is comfortable speaking with and disclosing information to, within 72 hours of a missing incident.			(green)
2016	The DfE should update the statutory guidance on missing children to include information on risks and responses to children who go missing as a result of grooming for criminal exploitation with specific reference to the responses that should be made when they go missing across 'county lines.	(pink)		
2016	A requirement must be placed on fostering agencies, similar to that which is currently in place on children's homes, to ensure that fostering agencies notify their local authority when children are placed with foster carers outside the local authority which is responsible for them.		(orange)	
2016	Offer and provision of independent return interviews to missing children after each missing episode.		(orange)	
2016	Scrapping of 'absent' category for children reported as missing to the police.			(green)
2016	Improvements in risk assessments at the time of a child reported as missing to the police based on relevant information from police and children's services.		(orange)	

2016	The Police and the Home Office should introduce a National Database for missing children that allows information to be shared across police lines. This database should be designed not only to provide accurate data about missing children at a national level but also to be a useful and proactive tool for coordinating and intelligently informing missing children investigations. It should include information about previously identified risks, where young people go missing from and to, and whom they go missing with.				
2016	A national information sharing protocol for missing children and accompanying best practice guidance should be designed by the DfE and the Home Office to allow the police and local authorities to share information about missing children for the purposes of risk assessment and intelligence gathering for ongoing police investigations and safeguarding work. This protocol should address the sharing of information from Return Interviews.				
2016	The DFE should work with ADCS, LGA and the College of Policing to develop changes to the notification process whereby the information that should inform risk assessment if a looked after child goes missing from out of area placement is shared with the police in the area in which a child is placed.				

The secretariat for the All Party Parliamentary Group on young runaways and missing children and adults is jointly provided by The Children's Society and Missing People.

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