

The most disadvantaged children rarely suffer on just one front. We work directly with these children, many of whom have nowhere else to turn, to ensure that they are loved, valued and listened to. With them we fight childhood poverty, harm and neglect.

Our network of programmes includes drop-in services for runaways, as well as children's centres and support for young carers. We support children who are refugees from violence, and we give those in care a voice. We transform the lives of many more children by pressurising government and local authorities to change policy and practice to protect them, and we challenge the negative attitudes that perpetuate harm and injustice.

In hard times, children are among the hardest hit.

We don't just help them survive - we support them to flourish.



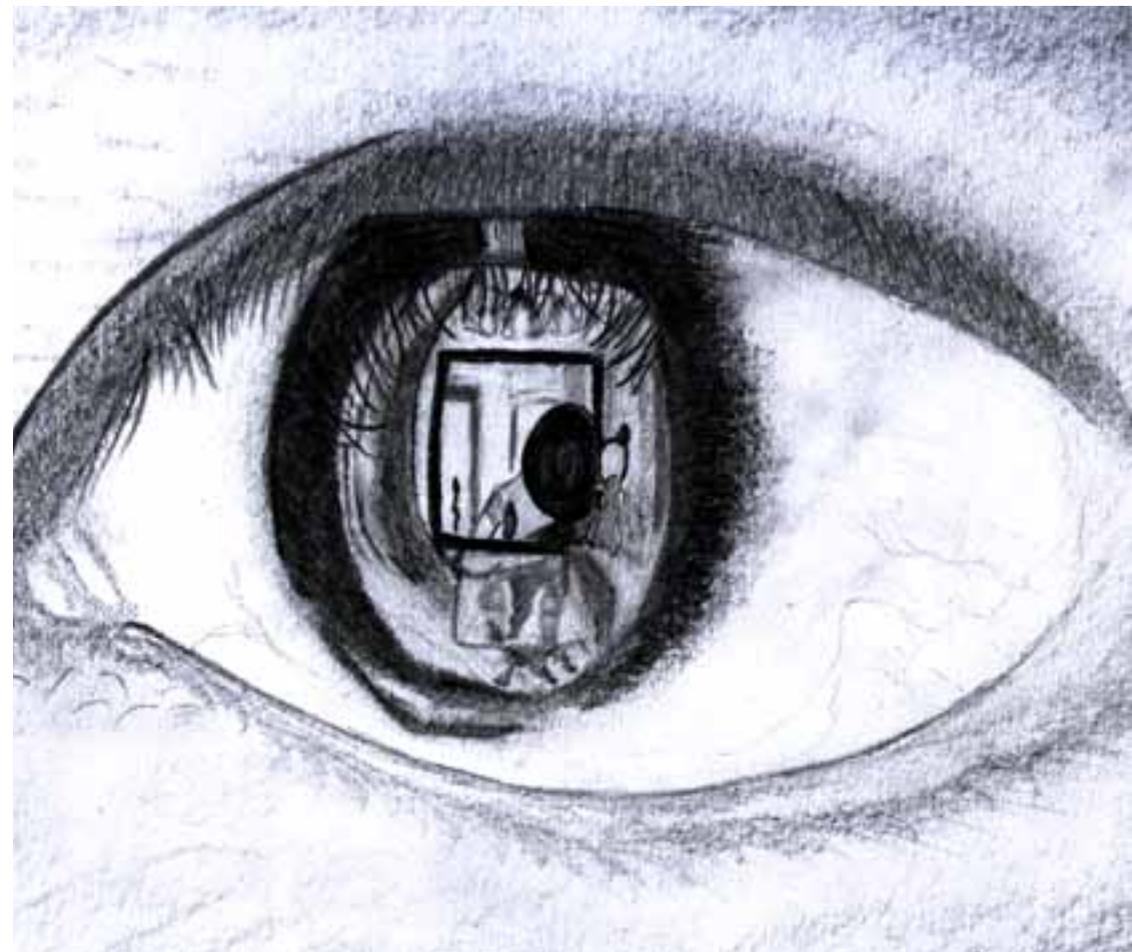
Help us build a safety net for
children who run away from home

makerunawayssafe.org.uk

A better childhood. For every child.

THE VANISHING

Why young people go missing –
through the eye of a young person



Children in care who run away

We know from our research that around 40-50% of children not living with their family – including those in residential and foster care – are likely to have run away at some point.

This may be due to many factors, including the quality of friendships, their feelings about school, or their family experiences prior to leaving home. Running away needn't necessarily be a reflection of the quality of care.

However, the disruption inherent in being 'looked after' by the system can compound the problems faced by young people, with devastating effects.

Here we listen to the voices of children living in care who have first-hand experience of running away. In their own words they share with us their desperation and hopelessness.

More and more evidence points to the fact that stable, loving relationships are essential to children's well-being. We also offer here some guidance, from young people themselves, on how those responsible for their care can help them to cope with the challenges they face.

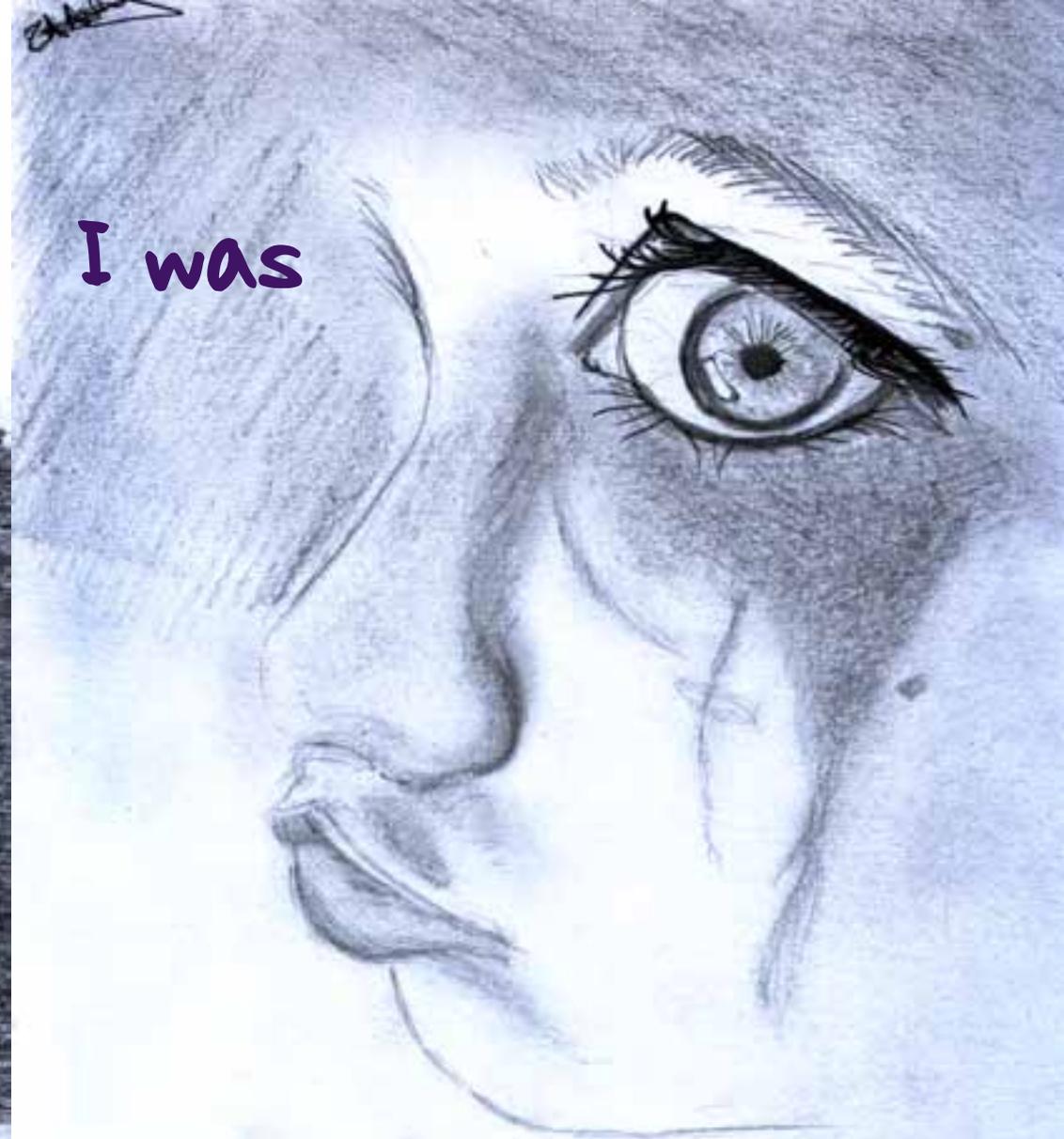
Feeling
All alone
No one cares
No one listens

I wanted to get stoned
so I could



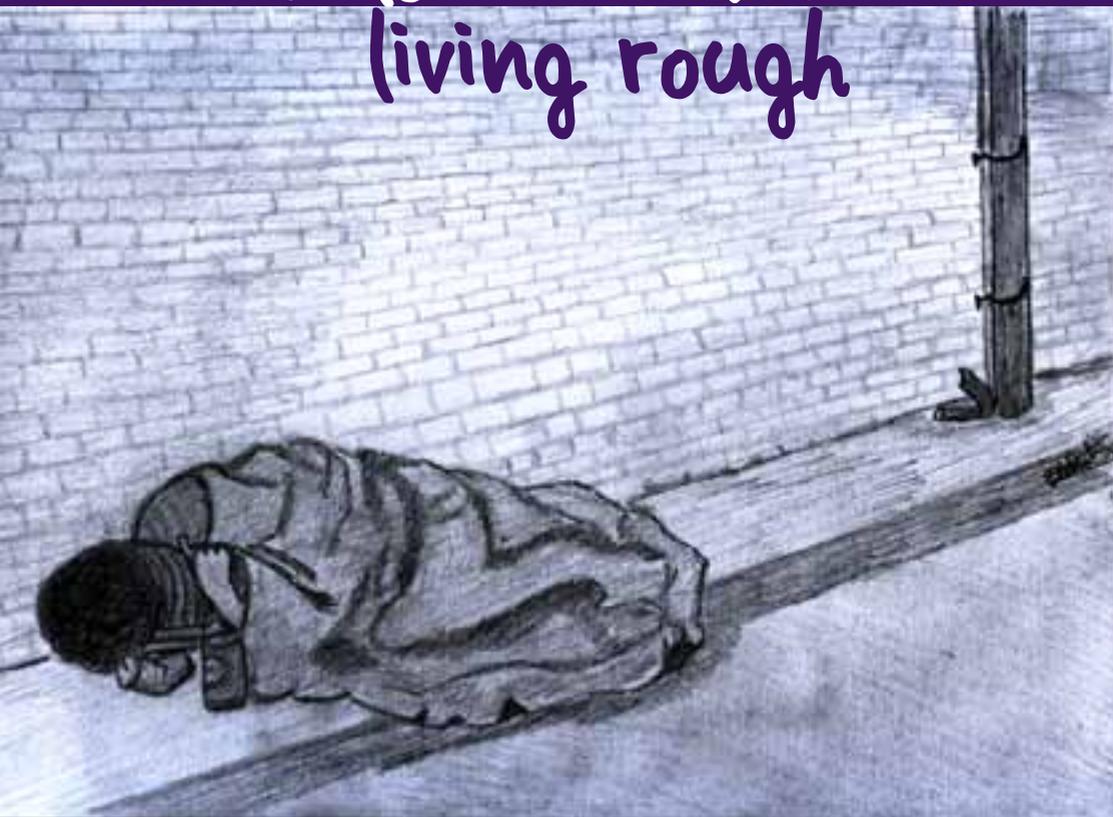
forget

I was



abused

He said he loved me, now I'm
living rough



Help
I want to



change

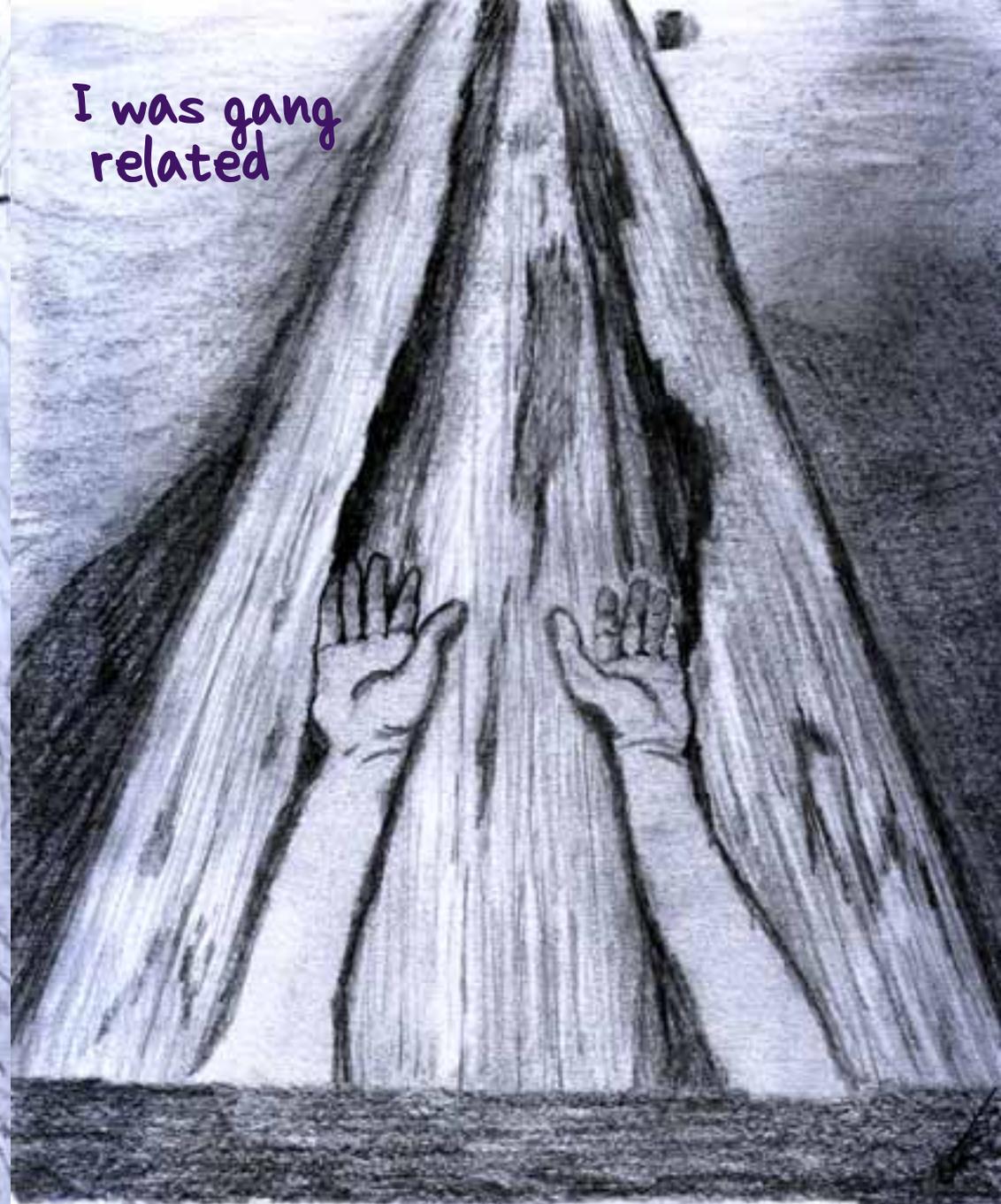
I don't know which



path

to take

I was gang
related



It's too late for me

I sold it,
I smoked it,
and



I became it

I don't want
to be here...



Save me,



that is what my children's
home will try and do

How professionals can help children at risk of going missing

1. Listen
2. Educate young people about the dangers of going missing
3. Work with social workers to maximise young people's contact with them
4. Offer young people alternatives and come to a compromise
5. Build good relationships between young people and staff
6. Engage and stimulate young people through interest and hobbies
7. Carry out work with young people around diversity, individualisation and identity
8. Work with parents and significant others to promote contact
9. Ensure young people can communicate with the home at all times
10. Advocate on young people's behalf to ensure the right agencies are involved
11. Educate young people around sexual exploitation, drugs and grooming
12. Keep professionals informed
13. Arrange strategy meetings

A child who does not go missing is less likely to be at risk

This booklet has been designed to help residential children's homes, foster carers, social workers and other professionals think about how they can help young people experiencing the feelings highlighted in the booklet.

This is what young people say about why they go missing from care homes. Now more than ever we need to hear these voices and take notice.



Big Thanks to:

This booklet's content was created by young people at a children's home in Birmingham with special thanks to Junior Patterson, Liz Astley, Simon Cottingham and Zara McDonald.