



The
Children's
Society

The vanishing:

Advice for care home staff on children
who go missing from care



The vanishing: Children who go missing from care

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 their friendships, their feelings about school, or their family experiences. Running away isn't necessarily a reflection of the quality of care.

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

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

More and more evidence points to the fact that stable, loving relationships are essential to children's well-being. Here we 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.

* Rees, G (2011) Still Running 3: Summary of findings from our third national survey of young runaways

'I wanted to get stoned so I could forget'

How care home staff can help prevent children going missing from care

1. Listen to us
2. Educate us about the dangers of going missing
3. Work with social workers to maximise their contact with us
4. Offer us a choice in any decisions that are made about our lives and be willing to compromise with us
5. Build good relationships with us
6. Engage and stimulate us through our interests and hobbies
7. Carry out work with young people around diversity and identity and treat us as individuals with unique needs and experiences identity
8. Work with our families and key members of our local community to help us maintain our ties to them
9. Ensure that we can communicate with the home at all times
10. Advocate on our behalf to ensure that the right agencies are involved in our care
11. Educate young people around sexual exploitation, grooming and drug misuse
12. Keep all the professionals involved in our care informed about our lives
13. Arrange strategy meetings with the relevant professionals so that we can be involved in the decisions that are made about our lives.



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

The Children's Society has been a leading provider of specialist services working with children who run away for over 25 years and currently runs dedicated projects that support hundreds of children in England. We lead the research, policy and practice agenda to ensure that no young runaway is left to survive on their own.

If you'd like to find out more about our work:

Email: policy@childrenssociety.org.uk

Visit: www.childrenssociety.org.uk/runaways-work

**For more advice and information on young runaways visit:
www.childrenssociety.org.uk/resources**

This factsheet 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.

For more details visit:

www.childrenssociety.org.uk/thevanishing

