



Department  
for Education

# **Consultation on the revised statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care**

**Government Response**

**January 2014**

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## Introduction

The current statutory guidance on *Children Who Run Away or Go Missing from Home or Care* was published in July 2009. The guidance needed to be updated to reflect: widespread concerns about children in care being sexually exploited; changes in policy, such as the requirement of national indicator 71 which no longer applies; and recent changes in statutory guidance (*Care planning and Working Together*).

The government therefore decided to produce a new version of the statutory guidance on *Children Who Run Away or Go Missing from Home or Care* to reflect these changes.

The consultation ran from 15 July 2013 to 17 September 2013 and sought the views of Local Authorities, representative bodies and other interested parties on the content of the guidance and flow charts.

## Summary of responses received and the Government's response

A public consultation on the revised statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care was completed on 17 September 2013. It attracted many useful responses from local authorities, police forces, and organisations that promote the interests of children and others.

### Numbers of responses received

<b>Total Responses received:</b>	<b>74</b>
Local Authority	19
Representative body	7
Young person	0
Police	8
Carer (children's home/foster carer)	19
Carer (other)	0
Voluntary sector	11
Other	10

### Details of any campaigns

The *Here to Listen* report from the Children's Society proposed that the draft guidance should be clarified with respect to independent return interviews. The Children's Society encouraged their supporters to respond to our consultation on the issue of return interviews and, following this, we received over **250** email responses on this issue.

### Main findings from the consultation

The key issues raised are described below, along with description of how these issues have been addressed in the final published guidance.

- **Be clearer and more consistent with definitions**, for example, ambiguity over the 'absent' and 'missing' categories; 'Runaways', 'Missing from Home', 'Missing from Care' descriptors; and over when to use 'absence' and 'unauthorised absence' terms.

*Terms have been defined more clearly, including to make a clear distinction between the police definition of "absent" and looked after children who are away from their care placement without authorisation.*

- **Be equally focused on children missing from home, as well as those missing from care**, for example young people who run away or go missing from home may have particular vulnerabilities that statutory agencies are not necessarily addressing.

*The guidance has been restructured to make clear when it is about dealing with all children, whether missing from home or from care, and when it is about the additional actions required for children missing from care.*

- **Be structured around the journey of a young person who goes missing or runs away**, for example, there should be greater background information to make those using the draft guidance fully understand why children run away or go missing, and the range of risks they face.

*Where possible, the guidance follows the journey of a missing child. The guidance does not intend to provide detailed analysis of why children go missing or of the risks they may face, but these are summarised in the introduction.*

- **Be clear that independent return interviews should be offered whenever a child returns from being missing from home or from care.**

*The final guidance makes clear that independent return interviews must be offered whenever a missing child is found, whether they have gone missing from home or from care.*

- **Be clearer around roles and responsibilities** and what is expected of individuals and agencies.

*The guidance has been revised to make these roles clearer.*

- **Include information on the particular issues of missing unaccompanied migrant children and of child sexual exploitation**, for example, unaccompanied asylum seeking children are one of the most high-risk groups of children in care to go missing very early into their admission many are never recovered.

*A section of the guidance covers the needs of unaccompanied asylum seeking children. Risks of child sexual exploitation are mentioned throughout the guidance. Further resources covering the particular needs of both groups are included in Annex B.*

- **Include information on dealing with children with special educational needs or disabilities**, for example, there will be a number of children and young people

with special educational needs or disabilities who might run but have little understanding of their actions.

*The guidance notes that local authority runaway and missing from home and care (RMFHC) protocols should describe responses for groups facing specific risks of going missing, such as children with learning difficulties who may have little understanding of their actions or the risks to them.*

- **For the accompanying flow chart to be simplified.**

*The flow chart has been revised to show the main steps that need to be taken when a child goes missing from local authority care, and where responsibility lies for those steps.*

## Next steps

The Department for Education will publish, on 17 January 2014, the revised statutory guidance on *Children Who Run Away and Go Missing from Home or Care* and the accompanying flowchart.

## **Annex A: List of organisations that responded to the consultation**

### **Local Authority**

- Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
- Devon County Council
- Durham County Council
- Gateshead Council
- Hackney Children's Services
- Halton Borough Council
- Kent County Council Specialist Children's services
- Lancashire County Council
- London Borough of Enfield
- Medway Council
- Nottinghamshire County Council / Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board (joint response)
- Oxfordshire County Council
- Peterborough City Council
- Reading Borough Council
- Rotherham Children and Young Peoples Services
- Sefton Corporate Parenting Board
- Sheffield City Council
- South Tyneside Children's Services
- Thanet District Council

### **Representative body**

- Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS)
- Association of Independent Chairs of Local Safeguarding Children Boards
- British Association of Social Workers (BASW)
- National Association of Independent Schools and Non-Maintained Special Schools (NASS)
- Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC)



- Ofsted
- The National Working Group (NWG)
- Young person

## Police

- Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) (Lead for Missing People)
- Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) Cymru
- Child Exploitation & Online Protection Centre (CEOP)
- Devon and Cornwall Police
- Lancashire Constabulary (Public Protection Unit)
- South Yorkshire Police
- UK Missing Persons Bureau
- West Yorkshire Police

## Carer (children's home/foster carer)

- ABC Care Ltd
- Advanced Childcare
- Arnfield Care Ltd
- Barford Children's Services
- Cornerways Children's Services
- Five Rivers Child Care Ltd
- G4S Children's Services
- Good Foundations Ltd
- Halliwell Homes
- Harmony Children's Services
- Hillcrest Beachlands
- Meadows Care Ltd
- Moonreach Ltd
- New Forest Care Ltd
- Oracle Care Ltd
- Pilgrims Corner Group

- Roundhouse Care
- The Independent Children's Homes Association
- Thoughts of Others Ltd

## **Voluntary sector**

- English Coalition for Runaway Children
- Fostering Network
- Missing People
- NSPCC
- Pathway Care Solutions (PCS)
- Railway Children
- Safe@Last
- The Children's Society
- The Refugee Children's Consortium (RCC)
- Trax Group
- Voice

## **Other**

- BASW (British Association of Social Workers)
- Cambridgeshire Local Safeguarding Children Board
- CAPE
- East Sussex Local Safeguarding Children Board
- Kent Safeguarding Board
- Keys Group
- Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board (Missing Children Subgroup)
- Specialisededucation.com
- Stockport Safeguarding Children Board
- Warrington Safeguarding Children Board



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