




Missing the Point

Reducing the risk of children
in care going missing

A close-up, profile view of a young woman with long, dark, wavy hair, looking thoughtfully to the left. She is wearing a black top and a thin black choker. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting. The image is partially overlaid by a large, semi-transparent red circle on the left and a purple circle on the bottom right.

**Ben Twomey,
Director of Policy
and Research**

How often are children reported missing from care in England?

11,000+
children
70,000 +
incidents

Over 1 in 10
/
1 in 200

Over 6x
/
under 3x

Risk and harm



**24% of all
identified or
suspected victims
of trafficking
were missing
from care**

“The victims are **children** however they present themselves.”

Why are children and young people sent to live in secure accommodation?

A child cannot be placed in secure accommodation and deprived of their liberty unless —

(a) that—

- (i) he has a history of absconding and is likely to abscond from any other description of accommodation; and
- (ii) if he absconds, he is likely to suffer significant harm; or

(b) that if he is kept in any other description of accommodation, he is likely to injure himself or other persons.

Missing the Point recommendations

1

No child should be criminalised as a result of being a victim of child criminal exploitation, such as county lines.

2

Every child is entitled after a missing episode to an independent return interview, conducted by someone not employed by the local authority.

“Patterns of **grooming** of children for **criminal exploitation** are very **similar** to those of **sexual exploitation**.”

“**In the past**, child sexual exploitation was often perceived amongst professionals as **the victim’s fault**, or due to their risky behaviour.”

“We believe that in some areas of the UK **a similar culture currently exists** around criminal exploitation by **gangs**.”

RIGHTS MATTER

**ARTICLE
12**

**ARTICLE
24**

**ARTICLE
34**

**ARTICLE
37**

**ARTICLE
39**

Vulnerability
to county
lines
exploitation

10
factors

1. Experience of **neglect and/or abuse**.
2. Lack of a **safe/stable home** environment.
3. Social **isolation** or social difficulties.
4. **Economic** vulnerability.
5. **Homelessness** or insecure accommodation status.

6. Connections with **gangs**.
7. Physical or learning **disability**.
8. **Mental health** or **substance misuse** issues.
9. Being in **care**.
10. **Exclusion** from mainstream **education**.

Communication is key!



The importance of return interviews

What has gone wrong?

What led to the child going missing?

What happened to the child while they were missing?

What are the child's views?

What support do they need now they have returned?

Difference between England and Wales policy

Statutory
requirement

Eligibility
criteria

72 hours

Independent
return
interviewer

Discussion
topics

Responsible
Commissioner

Risk of inaction

**Serious
harm**

**'Push' and
'pull' factors
continue**

**Inappropriate
or no
interventions**

**Rights lost
for risk
reduced**

**Unequal
access**

Can you help?

- 1 Ask your local Police and Crime Commissioner what they are doing to make sure no child victim of exploitation is treated like a criminal.**
- 2 Support the national protocols for reducing the criminalisation of care-experienced children and young people.**
- 3 Join our call for Welsh Government to make independent return interviews into a statutory requirement, or for the UK Government to strengthen its return interview guidance.**



**Any
questions or
comments?**