



CHILDREN MISSING FROM CARE

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REPORTS FROM THE APPG

June 2012

Report on children missing from home and care highlighted that the harm to children was not being identified whilst missing

July 2017

Children who go missing and are exploited by gangs to sell drugs ... seen to make a choice in the same way as victims of CSE 'child prostitutes'grooming not understood response to both parents and young people inadequate

May 2016

Inquiry into the safeguarding of 'absent children' boys seen as low risk lack of awareness of extent of gang exploitation

December 2017

An APPG meeting on County Lines brought together experts to discuss how children and young people could be better safeguarded from exploitation by gang members

Children's homes

As of March 31st 2018, **LAs provided 19% of all children's homes.**

The number of privately owned homes has increased year on year over the last 4 years (now 73% of all children's homes in England on 31 March 2018)

In 2018, more than one in 4 local authorities (44) do not directly provide any children's homes in their area

The north-west provides a quarter of all children's homes, but only accounts for 18% of its own children in children's homes

Conversely, London has only 5% of children's homes, but 14% of the children's home population.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER

5

Because it means that the choice of placement is being determined by the provider.

The unequal geographical distribution of children's homes leads to children being placed many miles away from home.

Out of borough placements

Since 2012, the number of children placed out of borough in children's homes has risen by 64%.

They now account for the majority of children in care homes - 61%

From 2015 to 2017 the number of missing incidents involving a child "out of borough" has increased by 110% - a faster rate of increase than for those going missing from children's homes within their own borough

About 1 in 5 missing episodes were from 20 miles or more from a child's home address

About 40% of all missing episodes were from a children's home despite the fact that they only account for 8% of all looked after children

The total number of missing incidents for children in care has almost doubled to about 10,000 a year

Missing children in Stockport

7

In September 81 children were reported missing to police in Stockport. These 81 children created 178 missing incidents.

21 children were reported as missing 3 or more times in September.

The most common placement for missing incidents was children's homes, generating 72 missing incidents in September. (40%)

Of the missing incidents from children's homes half were children who were placed by another authority.

80% of children reported as missing from children's homes in September had a vulnerability warning flag

Dangers and risks

- The APPG report in 2012 into children missing from care found evidence that children placed away from home were at a higher risk of going missing and at higher risk of physical and sexual abuse and of becoming involved in criminality
- Children giving evidence said that they felt dumped and isolated
- The National Crime Agency 2017 report into county lines highlighted the fact that children in care were targeted by gangs and said that children being groomed to sell drugs were often listed as missing
- In my survey sent to all police forces in the UK earlier this year they identified a strong link between children who go missing and who are exploited by county lines gangs. They also found evidence of the targeting of vulnerable children in children's homes, especially those in out of borough placements
- Children's Commissioners Report 2018 said that instability of school and care placements led to vulnerability to exploitation by gangs or abuse

CHILDREN'S HOMES SYSTEM

- Children in children's home are vulnerable
- One third of them have had six or more previous placements, almost half have histories of abuse or neglect and a high proportion have mental health issues.
- And yet the choice of placement is being determined by the provider
- More children are being placed in distant placements, more children are going missing from children's homes and more of those children are from out of area placements
- More children are being targeted for exploitation
- The outcomes for children in care remain poor and many end up in prison

- The recently set up Residential Care Leadership Board, chaired by Sir Alan Wood will assess data on the use of out of area placements as part of driving forward improvements in commissioning

Issues

Evidence based assessment of outcomes

Support for children in distant placements

If the fundamental problem is lack of local provision then maybe we need to think about how that can be increased and what it would look like

Children's Perspectives ... what works for them

- Trusting stable relationship is important because all the evidence is that children will only talk to somebody they trust
- How can you help if children won't talk to you
- How can you be effective if you don't deliver services in a way that children can respond to
- Methods of working have to engage the resources of communities, parents and children themselves

Local Innovations in Greater Manchester

- Achieving Change Together..... Rochdale and Wigan..... value of relationships , priorities set by young people themselves
- Not Just a Thought NHS England North... questionnaire designed by young people
- Advocacy Centre ... University of Salford.. Proposal developed by young people
- Real Voices are they being heard 2017

Changing attitudes is key

- If we change attitudes to children we change everything
- Sea change in attitude to gay rights. Strong messages, reinforced through the media, relayed through culture and art and repeated and reinforced in communities.
- The Rochdale and Rotherham scandals and press coverage changed attitudes towards girls once described as 'child prostitutes' but now recognised as sexually exploited children
- Society recognised that children were not making 'life style' choices – they were being groomed
- We who have responsibility for social policy and provision now also have a responsibility to change attitudes towards children who get mixed up in criminal gangs
- We need to talk about children in a way that gives greater understanding of their vulnerability to grooming and coercion by adults
- And we need to involve children, parents and the wider community in making sure all children are supported, even those children who are not easy to support
- The chaotic nature of the children's homes system is having devastating long term consequences on children and the rest of society. A fundamental change of approach is needed fast.