



## **APPG on Runaway and Missing Children and Adults**

*Call for evidence - Inquiry into out of area care placements for looked after children and young people*

The APPG on Runaway and Missing Children and Adults has launched an inquiry into how the safety of children and young people who go missing from out of area placements is ensured.

We are inviting interested individuals and groups to submit written evidence, which we will use to inform the inquiry. The deadline for submissions is **Tuesday 26 April 2019**. Please read the information below before submitting evidence. If further clarity is required, please contact Hannah Chetwynd via either email: [hannah.chetwynd@childrenssociety.org.uk](mailto:hannah.chetwynd@childrenssociety.org.uk) or telephone: 020 7841 4600.

### **1. Background**

In 2012 the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Runaway and Missing Children and Adults with the APPG on Looked after Children and Care Leavers carried out an inquiry into children who go missing from care. The inquiry made a number of recommendations including, a clamp down on the high numbers of 'out of area placements' and greater oversight to reduce the number of children living outside their own local authority.

This was introduced through changes to regulations and statutory guidance on distance placements. However, emerging evidence suggests that children and young people who go missing from care remain vulnerable and may still not be receiving the support they need.

Indeed, despite commitment from the government to reduce the number of looked after children placed out of area, the number of children and young people living in out of area placements has increased.

In 2012, around 46% of children in children's homes were placed out of borough, this figure reached 61% in 2017.

Evidence suggests that being placed a long way from family and friends is often a factor that causes them to run away or go missing. Additionally, these young people are often targeted for sexual and criminal exploitation, including running 'county lines'.

### **2. Call for evidence**

The inquiry will consider the risks facing children and young people who are in care placements outside of their local authority and the safeguarding procedures that are in place to protect them.

We are inviting evidence submissions that address the following topics:

## **General issues relating to children missing from care and out of area placements**

We would like to hear examples of what is currently working well in safeguarding children missing from care and what further changes are needed. We also welcome views on:

- If there is adequate data collection in place about children who go missing from care and where further changes are needed
- Reasons behind the increase in the number of children in out of area care placements
- The extent to which out of area placements are driven the resources available rather than made for the best interests of the child
- Where children and young people who go missing from out of area placements are found

We are seeking examples of the main reasons why children and young people go missing from out of area placements and what good practice looks like in how agencies respond to those that go missing. In addition, we would welcome views on what needs to change in this area.

## **Risks children and young people face when missing from out of area placements**

We seeking evidence on the risks, including new and emerging risks, that face children and young people who go missing from out of area placements. Further to this, we would like to learn more about what residential children's homes, foster care placements, local authorities and the police do to mitigate these risks.

## **Systems and structures in place to ensure safeguarding of children going missing from out of area placements**

We would welcome views on how well the notifications about children placed outside their home local authority boundaries are working and what changes are needed. We are interested in hearing evidence relating to the following groups of young people, those placed:

- Out of their local authority area but in a neighbouring area within the boundaries of their home police force
- Out of their local authority area but in a neighbouring area outside of the boundaries of their home police force
- In a distance placement within the boundaries of their home police force
- In a distance placement outside of the boundaries of their home police force

## **The appropriateness of out of area placements for children and young people at risk of going missing**

We would like to hear examples of good safety planning for children who have been placed in out of area placements and how frequently it occurs.

## **What needs to improve?**

We would welcome suggestions on how safeguarding responses for children and young people who go missing from out of area placements could be improved, including examples of good practice and whether national policy, guidance or inspection can be improved.

### **3. Submitting your response**

Please structure your submission so that it addresses each topic in turn. We intend to publish submissions we receive, unless requested otherwise. The submissions will inform an inquiry report, due to be published in summer 2018.

All submissions should be sent by email to [hannah.chetwynd@childrenssociety.org.uk](mailto:hannah.chetwynd@childrenssociety.org.uk) or via post to:

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