

Balance and perspective in responding to childhood risk

Missing People takes children's welfare very seriously. We know what the reality is for young runaways on the streets and in need of support. Every day we hear the pain and suffering caused to parents and other family members when a loved one goes missing. We work with policymakers, practitioners, and other charities to bring about real and lasting solutions to the issues which cause children to go missing, and to ensure the most professional response from the various agencies which can help find missing children.

Whilst steps need to be taken to safeguard children – including meeting the challenges posed by new technologies such as the internet – Missing People advocates a policy of *balance and perspective* when responding to the risks posed to children. Recent reports have highlighted how an obsession with child safety can have negative impacts for both children and parents. We believe that a society which is obsessed with eliminating *all* risk is a society that can deny children a childhood and may leave them ill-prepared for adulthood. Ironically, some young people may run away precisely to experience the kind of independence that modern childhood can sometimes deny them.

'Balance and perspective' means not sensationalising the extraordinary and not exaggerating the ordinary. It means formulating policy and practice based on sound evidence, not in response to a climate of fear and panic. It means offering solutions which are proportionate to the problems.

Missing People works in policy areas that can attract widespread media attention. Public attitudes towards risk are shaped as much, if not more, by what people and organisations in authority say than the actual likelihood of children experiencing danger and harm.

We strive to communicate to all external audiences in a manner which promotes calm and rational public debate and does not seek to inflate public anxiety unnecessarily. Also, Missing People will not normally endorse the goods or services offered by private companies or individuals which may (either intentionally or unintentionally) increase anxiety about the risks and dangers faced by children.

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