



Registered Charity No. 1020419

## Missing News

Welcome to the fourteenth issue of *Missing News*, produced by Missing People's Policy and Research Team ([policyandresearch@missingpeople.org.uk](mailto:policyandresearch@missingpeople.org.uk)), bringing you the latest developments in policy, practice and research from across the missing and related sectors.

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## **NEWS FROM THE MISSING SECTOR**

### **New Missing People Runaway Helpline website for young people**

Missing People has launched a new website: [www.runawayhelpline.org.uk](http://www.runawayhelpline.org.uk) to support children and young people thinking about running away, or those who are already away from home. An estimated 140,000 people under the age of 18 go missing each year and many factors can lead a child or young person to choose - or be forced - to leave home and care. The new website has been designed to help young people explore why they are thinking of leaving, why they are already away from home, or why they are still feeling unhappy after being away. More information for professionals working with children and young people, and a poster promoting the new website, are available [here](#).

### **Latest missing person statistics released**

The National Crime Agency's Missing Persons Bureau has released [reports](#) providing high level data on the number of missing persons in 2013/14 and 2014/15. The reports show an increase in the annual number of missing incidents reported to the police to 315,000. At least 4% of these incidents result in the missing person coming to harm. This equates to 35 missing people being harmed each day - although as the report acknowledges - this is likely to be a significant underestimate.

The report also shows that many of the incidents involve people who have been reported missing a number of times. Missing People is campaigning for every child and adult to be offered a return home interview which provides a vital tool in reducing the chance of someone going missing again through finding out why someone went missing and identifying and helping them access the help they need to prevent a recurrence. Jo Youle, Chief Executive of Missing People said:

*"People who are missing are often already vulnerable. Going missing puts them at a further, very high, risk of harm including sexual exploitation and other types of violent crime. This report highlights the vital roles of the police and the charity Missing People in working together to find missing people and make them safe.*

*The provision of return home interviews and follow-up support services is patchy for children across the UK and almost non-existent for adults. We are committed to campaigning for improving these important services."*

### **Campaign for Guardianship legislation**

Ann Coffey MP has tabled an [early day motion](#) (EDM) noting concern at the delay of the introduction of the guardianship legislation. Following years of campaigning by Missing People and members of the public, Justice Minister Lord Faulks announced proposals in March to introduce guardianship legislation which will allow relatives of a missing person

to look after finances and property in their absence, although a timetable for legislation has yet to be announced. As of 8 December, 24 MPs have signed the EDM. You can use our [online tool](#), to write to your MP to encourage them to sign the EDM.

### **Consultation on new police guidelines for missing people**

In October, the College of Policing released draft police guidance on missing persons for consultation (which closed on 9 October). When responses to the consultation have been considered it will lead to official guidance for police officers – known as Authorised Professional Practice (APP) – to support them in missing persons investigations. You can read Missing People’s response to the consultation [here](#).

### **The value of Return Home Interviews**

In October, Railway Children published a [report](#) examining the value of return home interviews and follow-up support when young people have been missing. The study used social return on investment analysis to assess return home interview and follow up support delivered in four charities, including Missing People, and found that every £1 invested in these services achieves a social value of between £3 and £7 with an estimated average of £5.47. Return home interviews provide a chance to understand the reasons causing a child to go missing, as well as identify or deal with any harm experienced whilst they were away. You can find out more in our [Return Interviews](#) information sheet.

### **Missing Persons Strategy in Scotland**

The Scottish Government has just closed a [consultation](#) on proposals for a new Missing Person’s Strategy. Missing People’s Policy and Campaigns manager, Anna Collins, laid out [Missing People’s response](#) in a blog post on the website, highlighting how the strategy incorporates some of the charity’s [manifesto calls](#), including those relating to return home interviews for vulnerable adults and guardianship legislation.

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## **CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (CSE)**

In November, the Office of the Children’s Commissioner published [Protecting children from harm](#). It presents findings from the first phase of an inquiry into child sexual abuse within family networks. The report shows that 1 in 20 children are sexually abused and two thirds of this happens within the family. Childhood sexual abuse within the family is most likely to occur around the age of nine, although victims are most likely to come to the attention of authorities in adolescence.

The Children’s Society published [Old enough to know better?](#) in November. The report highlights the particular risks faced by 16 and 17 year olds experiencing, or at risk of, child sexual exploitation who are often not identified as victims nor offered the same protection

as those under 16. Amongst other things, the report recommends implementing a national register of missing people to help protect vulnerable young people.

Barnardo's [published a report](#) in September which states that children with learning disabilities are more vulnerable to child sexual exploitation than other children. The report suggests that young people with learning disabilities are often not specifically considered in local multi-agency arrangements for CSE, which may result in those at risk of, or experiencing, CSE not being identified or getting support.

The Scottish Government [published a report](#) in October updating on progress made in protecting vulnerable children in the past year since the publication of the [National Action Plan](#) to Tackle Child Sexual Exploitation. The report highlights: a national public awareness campaign on CSE; a programme of work to raise awareness of CSE amongst night time economy workers; and the establishment of a steering group to oversee the implementation of the [Brock report](#) recommendations.

In November, Barnardo's and Marie Collins Foundation published [Digital Dangers](#), a report examining the impact of technology on the sexual abuse and exploitation of children and young people. It finds that even children and young people displaying no known indicators of CSE (e.g. going missing or school absence) can be victims of online sexual exploitation, particularly sending and receiving sexually explicit messages and images.

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## **MENTAL HEALTH**

### **Suicide**

A coalition of charities, including Samaritans and Rethink Mental Illness, have written to the Backbench Business committee [calling for male suicide to be treated as a national public health issue](#) on a par with smoking, obesity, or pollution. Research from Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM) published figures showing that more than one in ten men had thought about taking their own life at some point. In 2014, 6,233 people took their own life, almost 80% of which were men.

In September, Public Health England published a support guide for those affected by suicide. [Help is at Hand](#) describes the kind of situations people might find themselves in when someone they know has died by suicide. It provides practical guidance on a wide variety of topics, such as dealing with the media and visiting the place of death. It also provides a list of support organisations.

### **Mental health service provision**

In November, the [Kings Fund published a report](#) about the pressures faced by the mental health sector. The report asserts that parity of esteem for mental health remains a long way off despite the issue receiving greater political support and a stronger policy focus. It highlights that 40% of mental health trusts experienced reductions in income in 2013/14 and 2014/15 and only 14% of patients say that they received appropriate care in crisis. Similarly, [statistics published](#) by NSPCC in October highlight the pressures on local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), showing that a fifth of children referred for specialist support do not receive any help or treatment because they do not meet the 'high clinical threshold'.

Also in November, Mind published figures suggesting that local authorities in England [spend an average of 1% of their public health budget on mental health](#). Mind called this spending 'negligible' and points to the economic cost of mental health problems, estimated to be around £51 billion per year.

### **Child and adolescent mental health**

In November, the [Youth Select Committee published a report](#) on young people's mental health. The report points to disparities in service provision for mental and physical health issues and challenges the government to increase funding for young people's mental health services.

In October, ONS published [statistics on children and young people's well-being](#) which shows that one in eight children aged 10-15 reported symptoms of mental ill-health in 2011-12. According to the statistics, children who were being bullied frequently were four times more likely to have symptoms of mental ill-health.

Also in October, the Scottish Government [published a report](#) on the mental health and well-being of adolescents. The findings, based on children aged 13 to 15, show that a positive experience of school and friendship are the two things most closely aligned with mental well-being. Other factors included living with both parents, expecting to go to university, and belonging to a club. Higher levels of deprivation and poorer physical health were found to correlate with lower levels of mental well-being.

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## **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

### **Missing from care**

[Statistics](#) published by the Department for Education in October show that 6% of children in care went missing and 3% were away from their placements without authorisation at least once during the financial year 2014/15. About half of all these cases involved young

people over the age of 16.

Ofsted has published their [findings from inspections](#) of local authority children's services identified as inadequate when inspected in the first half of 2015. One of the five weaknesses highlighted was the failure to identify potential cases of child sexual exploitation because children returning from being missing were not provided with effective return home interviews. The findings also show that local authorities do not consistently evaluate the outcomes from return home interviews to assess emerging patterns and trends. A lack of strategic planning within local authorities and between partners with respect to their response to CSE was also found.

In September, the National Police Chief's Council published their [national strategy](#) for the policing of children and young people. The strategy emphasises the need to identify the vulnerability of children and respond to this effectively to ensure they are protected from harm. Looked after children are one of the priority areas highlighted by the strategy, in part because they make up a significant proportion of children and young people who go missing on a regular basis each year. The strategy emphasises the need to recognise the potential risk of harm to children who go missing and put measures in place to mitigate this.

### **Placement stability**

A [freedom of information request](#) by the charity Action for Children has found that one in four foster children moved home two or more times between April 2014 and March 2015. The 2013 Ofsted report [Missing Children](#) found that maintaining placement stability is key to reducing incidence of missing amongst children in care.

### **Review of residential care for young people**

In October, the Department for Education announced [a review of residential care for young people and improving residential care outcomes](#). The review will examine what works and what could be improved within placement settings, and what improvements could be made to commissioning, delivery and regulation to improve outcomes for looked after children. The deadline for submission is the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015.

### **Training for rail staff to spot vulnerable children**

British Transport Police (BTP) are [to provide training for railway station staff](#) on how to spot vulnerable children as part of a new initiative developed by BTP and the charity Railway Children. It follows the report published last year by the Transport Select Committee which recommended that BTP should be brought into line with other police forces in setting targets as to how well they support vulnerable children. BTP recorded 6,000 incidents involving vulnerable children last year, including many who were running away from home.

### **Issues affecting children and young people**

Statistics on the [characteristics of children in need](#) (2014/15) were published by the Department for Education in October. The data shows that the number of children in need fell by 2% between 2014 and 2015 but the number of children at risk (subject to a child protection plan) increased by 2.9% over the same period. Children's primary needs were most commonly neglect and abuse. Other additional factors identified during assessments include domestic violence (in half of assessments) and mental health problems pertaining to either the child or other members of their household.

The Anti-Bullying Alliance [published figures](#) which show that almost two thirds of young people (aged 16-25) were bullied at school, nearly half of whom said it resulted in mental health problems including anxiety, depression self-harm and suicide ideation. Furthermore, a third of young people who were bullied avoided school or college as a way of coping with the bullying. [Statutory guidance on keeping children safe in education](#) highlights that missing from education can be and indicator of abuse or neglect and signposts the [statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care](#) for more information about this specific issue.

Other research conducted by Vodafone and YouGov shows that [one in five young people has experienced cyber bullying](#) and over half think that it is worse than face-to-face bullying. 40% of the 5,000 young people surveyed said that they could not tell their parents about abuse out of fear, or simply not wanting to get them involved.

The [2015 Good Childhood Report](#), a survey of childhood wellbeing covering 15 diverse countries published by The Children's Society, found that more children are unhappy with their school life than in almost every one of the other countries included in the study. Bullying is highlighted as a notable marker of low wellbeing and finds that more than a third of 10 and 12 year olds in England had been physically bullied in the last month.

### **New website for parents**

Parent Zone and the Child Exploitation and Online Protection team (CEOP) have [launched Parent Info](#), an online tool designed to provide parents with a better understanding of what their children are accessing online: [www.parentinfo.org](http://www.parentinfo.org). The government points to research which shows that almost a quarter (23%) of girls between the ages of 9 and 16 have been upset about something happening online, yet one in five parents say they do not know enough about how to educate their children about the risks of the online world

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## **GANGS**

In September, the Centre of Excellence for Information Sharing published a report on the [benefits and challenges of tackling gang and youth violence](#). The report sets out common information sharing issues and barriers faced by local areas across the country and challenges facing the multi-agency approach. The report highlights the importance of early and continuing intervention by safeguarding, health, and education agencies to deal with the underlying causes of gang violence. In the last edition of Missing News we announced the launch of [Running the Risks](#), a joint research report from Missing People and Catch 22's Dawes Unit, which examines the links between gang involvement and young people going missing.

The Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) has published [two reports on preventing gang and youth violence](#). The reports aim to identify and summarise the common features underpinning effective programmes both in the UK and abroad in order to identify children that might become involved in gang and youth violence and prevent them doing so. The most effective programmes were found to be school- or family-based and involved skill-practice, parental training, and therapy.

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## **HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY**

ECPAT UK was successful in its [campaign to secure](#) amendments to Scotland's Human Trafficking and Exploitation Bill which will ensure that children who are forced to commit crimes by their traffickers are protected from prosecution and that trafficked and separated children in Scotland will receive a legal guardian to protect and advocate for them. The special vulnerability of children is also acknowledged in the criminal offences set out in the Bill. An exploration of the research linking missing and trafficked children, co-written by Missing People and ECPAT UK, is included in our information sheet: [Trafficked children and 'missing'](#).

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## **EARLY, CHILDHOOD AND FORCED MARRIAGE**

Inside Government has announced a new forum event taking place on 24 February 2016: [Working Together to Eradicate Forced Marriages in the UK](#). The event will examine the latest government and third-sector initiatives including the legal framework after the introduction of new offences. According to the Home Office, approximately 3,000 cases of forced marriages were reported from 2013-15, of which 79% were female, 21% male and



11% under the age of 16. You can find out more about the links between missing and forced marriages in our information sheet: [Missing and honour based violence](#).

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## CONSULTATIONS AND INQUIRIES

31<sup>st</sup> December. [Children's residential care review: independent call for evidence](#).  
Department for Education.

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## DATES FOR THE DIARY

10 December [Machynlleth Missing People Carol Service](#)  
12 December [York Missing People Carol Service](#)  
14 December [Liverpool Missing People Carol Service](#)  
19 December [Chester Missing People Carol Service](#)

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Please contact Jenny Dickson (Information and Evaluation Officer)  
at [jenny.dickson@missingpeople.org.uk](mailto:jenny.dickson@missingpeople.org.uk) if you have any feedback about this newsletter or  
would like to share the work of your organisation or project in the next edition.

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