

Inquiry into ‘out of area’ care placements for looked after children and young people

Written Submission to the APPG on Runaway and Missing Children and Adults

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1. Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written evidence to this inquiry. I am writing on behalf of the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS), a leading children's rights charity that supports and empowers care-experienced young people across England and Wales.

NYAS conducts nearly 2,000 Return Interviews each year for over 700 children who go missing from care. Our Return Interviewers work with local councils to identify ways to prevent further missing incidents, and address any risks such as child sexual exploitation or county lines. We only conduct Return Interviews where the child or young person has consented to be interviewed.

The APPG is right to highlight that the number of children going missing from care has more than doubled since 2015, and we echo MPs' fear that these children are 'sitting ducks' for exploitation.¹

We look forward to working with the Inquiry to address the alarming increase in the number of care-experienced young people going missing.

2. Our Offer to the Inquiry

Further to this NYAS submission, we urge the inquiry to directly take account of the views of children who have gone missing from a care placement. Their voice must be at the heart of any new work to tackle this issue.

Given the short timeframe in which to arrange a written submission, we are working with the Inquiry to conduct interviews with care-experienced young people so as to inform the Inquiry's conclusions.

Our offer to the Inquiry is as follows: where practical, ethical and with the consent of the child, we will do all we can to empower them to have their voice and experiences heard. We hope that facilitating this will significantly strengthen the Inquiry's work.

3. Key Statistics (From NYAS Return Interview Data 1st January – 31st December 2018)

703 Young people offered a Return Interview by NYAS	1,950 Return Interviews offered following missing episodes	2.77 Average number of missing episodes per young person
17 The most common age for a missing from care episode	60% Of 'out of area' missing episodes are of male young people	2.5 Times more likely to decline a Return Interview if placed 'in borough'
£130 Average cost of a NYAS Return Interview	£2,161 Average cost of a medium risk medium term missing person investigation to the police only	75% Return Interviews identified 'breakdown in communication' as a reason for missing

4. Return Interviews

4a. Missing Children and Return Interviews

Children in care are significantly more likely to be reported missing than those not in care, with over 1 in 10 going missing compared to 1 in 200 of those not in care.² Looked after children are also more likely to go missing repeatedly. While the risks are greater, it is important to note that the majority of children in the care system do not go missing. Countless care-experienced young people show extraordinary resilience through difficult circumstances.

When children do go missing, Return Interviews are an important safeguard for them. Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing states that when a child is found they should be offered an independent Return Interview.³

However, the Children's Society concluded in 2017 that Return Interview "provision for children who go missing remains patchy. Opportunities to intervene early and offer help before risks become more serious may be lost, making these vulnerable children even more vulnerable".⁴

The key benefits of Return Interviews are to identify people at risk; understand the risks and issues faced whilst missing; reduce the risks of future episodes of missing or running away; and equip people with the resources and knowledge of how to stay safe if they do choose to run away again.⁵ NYAS uses the terms 'push and pull factors', in order to try and capture what has led to the young person going missing.

4b. NYAS Statistics

To inform the work of the inquiry, we offer the following data from the year 2018 (1st January – 31st December). During this period, NYAS primarily provided Return Interview services on behalf of ten local authorities in England:

Bedford	Bexley	Coventry	Greenwich	Hillingdon
Isle of Wight	Luton	Peterborough	Slough	Solihull

During 2018, NYAS offered Return Interviews to 703 young people on 1,950 occasions, averaging 2.77 missing episodes per young person.

Of all these Return Interview offers, 210 (11%) were for children and young people in 'out of area' placements.

4c. Declined Interviews

NYAS only conduct Return Interviews with the consent of the young person, which is not always given. Analysis of the rates of 'declined' interviews revealed a significant difference between children 'in borough' and 'out of area'. Although the sample size for 'out of area' interviews is smaller, it does appear to show that children missing from 'in borough' placements are over twice more likely to decline to be interviewed than those in 'out of area' placements.

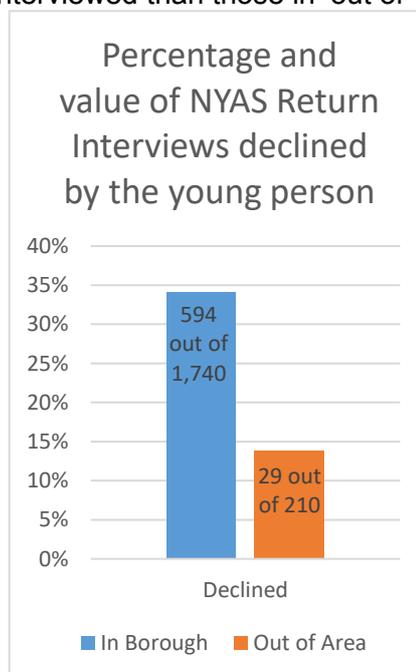
1,740 Return Interviews were offered to young people 'in borough', of which 594 (34%) were declined.

210 Return Interviews were offered to young people 'out of area', of which 29 (14%) were declined.

NYAS do not currently record why children decline interviews, although our new case management system will do by the end of this year.

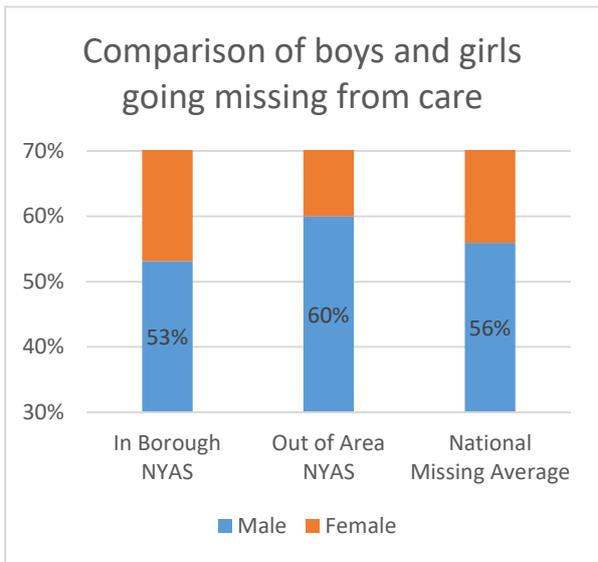
Anecdotally, NYAS staff report that children decline Return Interviews for a number of reasons, which can include:

- The young person knows that we cannot always offer confidentiality in Return Interviews, and some information has to be shared.
- Sometimes the young person does not want to talk to someone else or someone new.
- Occasionally we get the referral from the Local Authority too late after the missing episode so the young person no longer wishes to talk about it. They can adopt an attitude that we were not interested when it happened, so why would we be now?
- The young person may expect that nothing can be done, or have been asked about their experiences before and concluded that 'nothing changed'.
- If the young person is being groomed they may be fearful of an interview, and could have been threatened to put them off speaking to professionals or adults.



4d. Gender

Slightly more boys go missing from care than girls. The NYAS figures appear in line with national rates, but our data also revealed that the rate of missing males is higher compared to females in 'out of area' placements, than those placed 'in borough'.

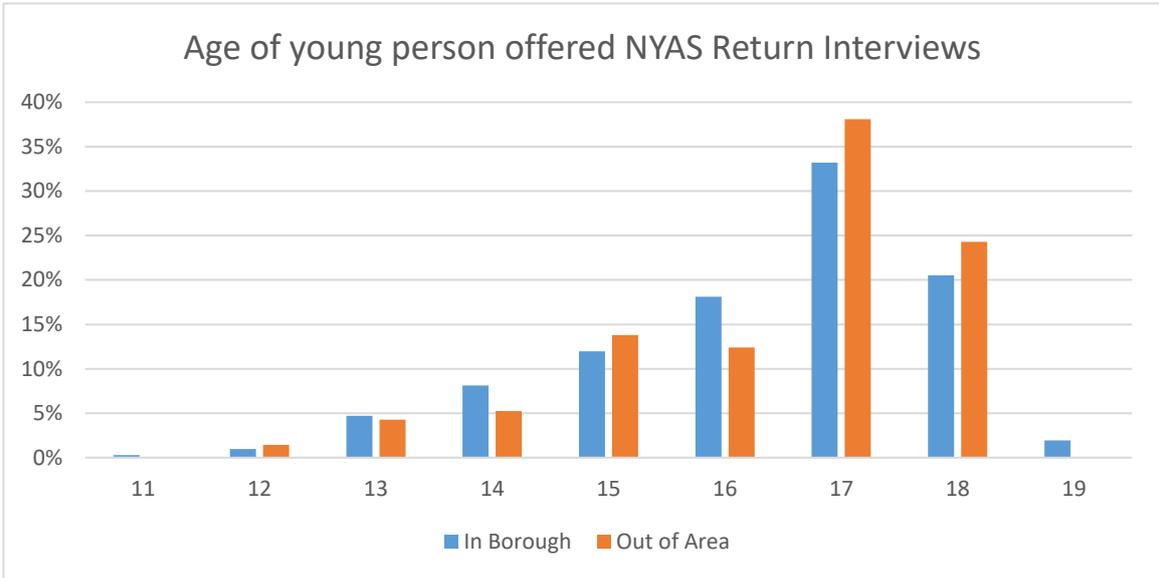


The national average percentage of males and females going missing from care (56%) is actually in direct proportion to the proportions of males and females who are looked after. While we do not have data to say if males are more likely to be placed 'out of area', we can conclude that male children and young people go missing from 'out of area' placements more often than females.

**We did not have any cases where a gender other than male/female was recorded.*

4e. Age

Nine out of ten (89%) young people missing from 'out of area' placements in 2018 are aged 15-18. The most common age for a missing episode was 17 years old. There was no meaningful difference in the ages of children going missing when comparing 'in borough' to 'out of area' placements.

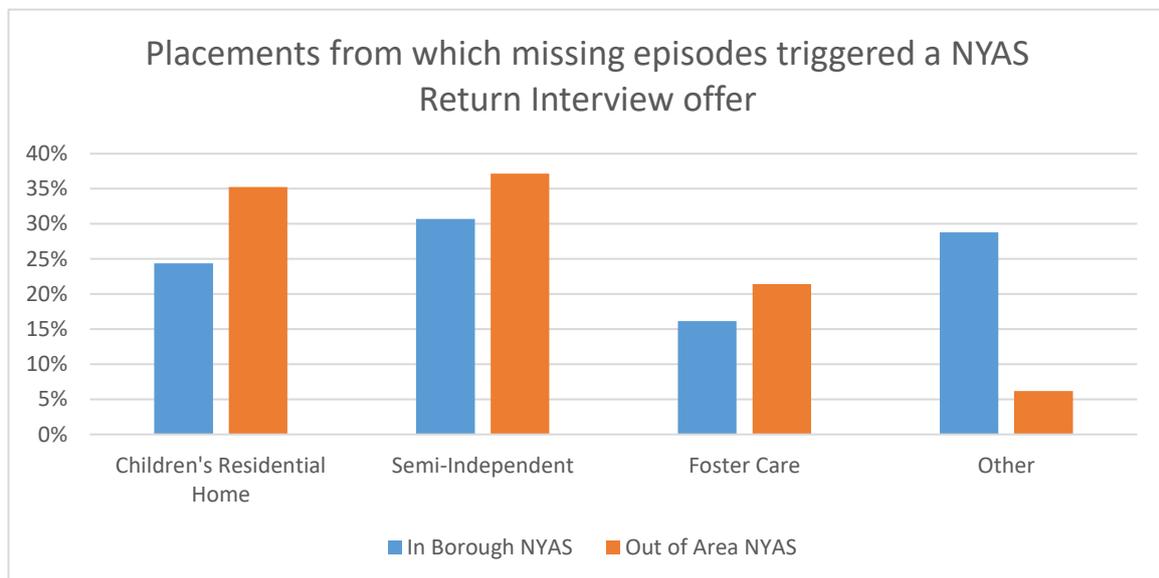


**Some statistics were not included in the graph, but still reflected in the overall percentages, as each represented less than 0.5% of interviews offered. There was 1 seven year old and 2 nine year olds 'in county', as well as 1 'out of area' young person whose age was not recorded. There were no eight or ten year olds recorded as being offered Return Interviews by NYAS in 2018. This exercise also revealed a gap in age data in that this is the age of interviewees at time of writing (April 2019), rather than at the time of the Return Interview offer in 2018. While the conclusions would remain broadly similar, this gap in data collection is something that will be remedied with NYAS' new case management system later this year.*

4f. Placement Type

Nationally, secure units, children's homes and semi-independent living arrangements are not recorded separately for missing episodes. Together though, they make up 48% of missing episodes, with 29% missing from foster placements.⁶ To the extent that comparisons can be made, this appears relatively consistent with our data for children missing from 'in borough' placements.

Return Interview contracts with local authorities may be separate to contracts for those missing from hospitals or secure units. However, what we can read from our data is that children placed 'out of area' are significantly more likely to go missing from children's homes, semi-independent living or foster care, compared to other placements. These three placement types made up 94% of missing episodes for 'out of area' children, compared to 71% for 'in borough' children. That may be because these placement types are more common 'out of area'.



**'Other' includes all other forms of placement, and may be significantly higher 'in borough' because this data includes missing episodes of children who are not placed in the care system. If a child were living 'out of area', the Local Authority would not generally take responsibility for them unless acting as their corporate parent.*

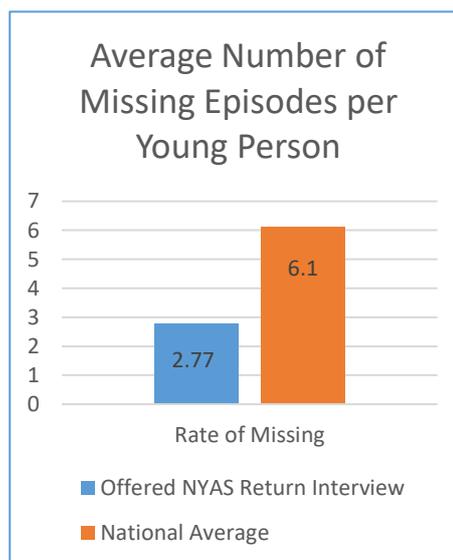
4g. Cost of a Missing Episode and Return Interview

The average cost of a Return Interview by NYAS is £130.22.⁷ This includes technological and back office costs that facilitate the work of the Return Interviewer. The average number of hours work per case for our Return Interviewers is 4.3.

If further missing episodes are prevented or reduced by the Return Interview, then this figure is even more significant given that the cost to the police of a medium risk medium term missing person investigation is £2,161.^{8*}

The latest Home Office estimates, produced in 2011, show that the annual cost of missing person investigations equates to 19,188 Police Constables working full time or to 14% of the total number of full time police officers across the UK.⁹ A missing person investigation is likely to cost three times more than a robbery investigation and four times more than burglary.¹⁰

While there are countless factors that can affect the occurrence or frequency of missing episodes, Return Interviews can have a crucial role. Where NYAS interviews were offered in 2018 (whether accepted or declined), the average number of missing episodes per child in that year was 2.77. Meanwhile, the latest national data revealed an average of 6.1 missing episodes per child in the financial year 2017/18.¹¹ This suggests that where a NYAS Return Interview was offered, the likelihood of young people repeatedly going missing was significantly reduced.



Breaking down barriers to communication between young people and adults in their placement can have a significant impact on the likelihood of missing episodes. Pragmatic decision-making is needed when reporting and responding to a missing episode. While there are real risks to young people, some missing episodes can be considered part of growing up. For example, any parent might recognise the situation where their child is out with friends and late home for dinner. Return Interviews can identify these cases and quickly resolve them, dispelling any “frustration” between police and children’s social care providers around when is appropriate to report a child missing.¹² Occasionally residential care homes report a child missing when they are actually ‘absent without consent’. Return Interviews will identify these referrals, where the whereabouts of the young person is always known, and depending on whether an offer of interview is made then these can still be accounted for in our data.

5. General issues relating to children missing from care and ‘out of area’ placements

5a. General issues

There has been a marked increase in the number of ‘out of area’ care placements, and the effect this is having on missing episodes has not yet been fully explored. The Inquiry rightly highlights that the number of children in children’s homes placed ‘out of area’ increased from 46% to 61% between 2012 and 2017.¹³

National statistics do not reveal the differences in missing episodes between ‘in borough’ or ‘out of area’ placements.¹⁴ National statistics are also too broad in combining placement types of secure units, children’s homes and semi-independent living arrangements. These are three very distinct types of placement, but currently rates of missing are revealed for all three together, with no narrative or nuance about where the issues or trends are.

Increasing or decreasing the number of children in 'out of area' care placements is a decision for local authorities which can be affected by numerous factors. Resources continue to be a major consideration for local authorities in all decision-making, which is unsurprising considering sustained funding pressures. Central Government funding available for 0-19 year olds across all children's services except schools and early education fell by a third from £813 in 2010-11 to £553 in 2017-18.¹⁵ Cuts to the sector may yet intensify further, as 91% of L/As overspent on their children's social care budget in the last two years (2017-2018).¹⁶

In response to this funding pressure, many local authorities are seeking new ways to deliver their services. One way this is done is through increasing collaboration, for example in Greater Manchester where there is 10-borough 'Common Care Offer' for those leaving care.¹⁷ Greater collaboration is generally to be welcomed, especially if freeing up or pooling funds to make a greater impact for care-experienced young people. However, it should be monitored for the effect of 'out of area' placements, for example in the case of Shropshire, Staffordshire, Telford and Wrekin and Stoke-on-Trent. These local authorities are considering plans that appear to make it more likely for children to be fostered or adopted by families in neighbouring boroughs.¹⁸ If risks and best practice are identified, then such authorities have the opportunity to be at the forefront of further research or new approaches.

The mental health of care-experienced young people should be at the forefront of decisions made about them. Looked after children are four times more likely to have a mental health difficulty, which in many cases is attributed to isolation and loneliness.¹⁹ Anecdotally and from a dip sample of NYAS Return Interview cases, children in 'out of area' placements appear to describe feelings of isolation and loneliness more often than those residing 'in borough'.

Young people's mental health and wellbeing can be significantly compromised by adverse environments and the experience of trauma.²⁰ In many cases, removing a young person from an adverse environment is not enough to expect that young person to be resilient to their earlier experiences.²¹ While the decision to place a child 'out of area' should be based on their best interests, it is not always clear that new protective factors will be built around the child in that area. There is then a risk of the child feeling detached from positive structures and relationships that they might otherwise have maintained. This has clear implications for the likelihood of children going missing from 'out of area' placements.

5b. Reasons for Missing Episodes (Push and Pull Factors)

A key element of Return Interviews is to establish *why* a young person has gone missing from their care placement. By far the most common 'push' factor appears to be 'breakdown in communication', while the most common 'pull' factor is 'friendship groups'. Below is analysis of a single NYAS local authority Return Interview contract for the year of 2018, where 226 push or pull factors identified.

'Borough A' charts are high level data from a single contract for a single year, and is not a large enough sample to be indicative of issues in every borough or 'out of area' placement. What is clear however is the significance of communication. Generally, young people that go missing appear to be wanting to communicate with friends, and failing to communicate with professionals.

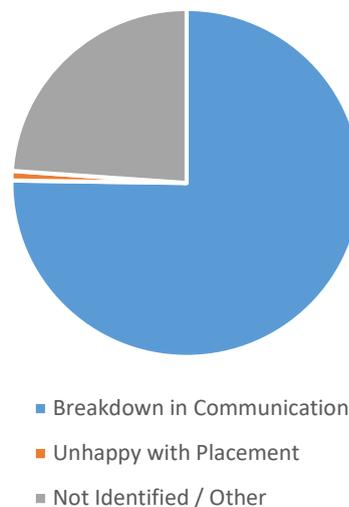
Sometimes issues are not identified at all because the young person accepts the Return Interview but then refuses to disclose any information. Other push and pull factors that were not evident in this dip sample, but are occasionally identified in Return Interviews, include:

- Parental Substance Misuse / Domestic Violence / Mental Health
- Neglect / Abuse
- Poverty
- Sibling Issues
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Child Criminal Exploitation
- Radicalisation

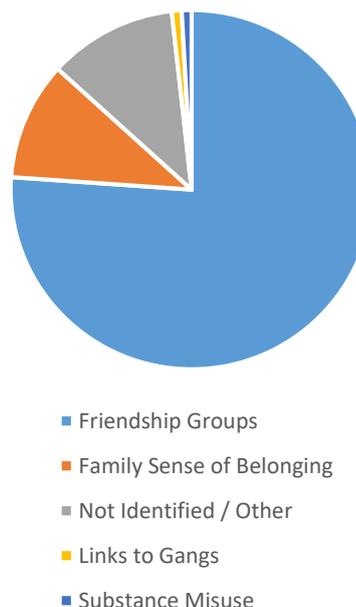
Each Return Interview results in information being shared with the local authority (corporate parent) and other partners where necessary, including the police.

Importantly however, Return Interviewers have no control over whether intelligence is turned into action by the local authority. Understanding local authority processes, audit trails and best practice once a Return Interview has been conducted, may account for the differences in rates of missing young people in their care.

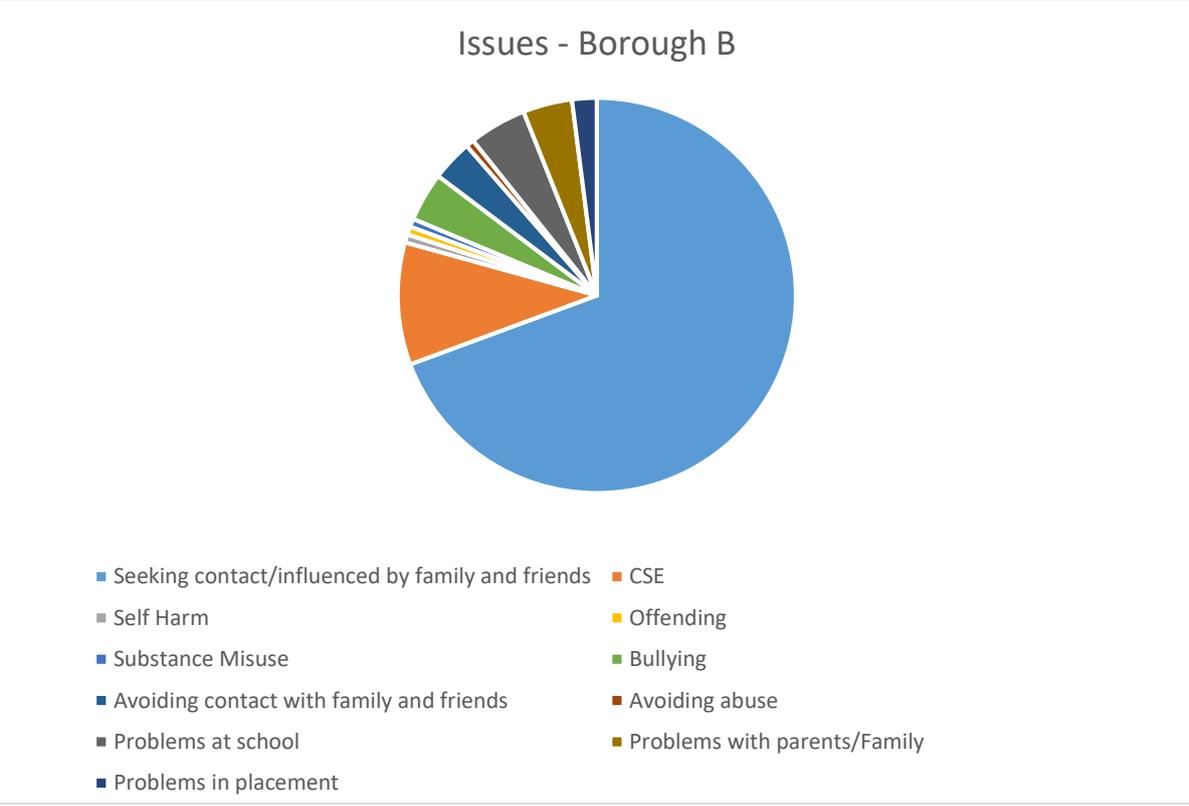
Push Factors - Borough A



Pull Factors - Borough A



In another area, 'Borough B', the Local Authority preferred reasons for going missing to be logged as issues or risks. Of 150 issues logged in one quarter, the most prevalent were again seeking contact with or influenced by families and friends. Combined these are at a very similar level to the 'pull factor' of friendship groups in the previous borough sampled. In this dip sample, CSE came through more clearly as a risk factor or issue.



The differences in Local Authority recording and reporting mechanisms, usually evident in varying requirements for Quarterly Monitoring Reports (QMRs), can make it difficult to draw direct comparisons.

6. Risks children and young people face when missing from 'out of area' placements

6a. Child Exploitation

Children and young people missing from care can find themselves at risk of harm, and this is most often associated with exploitation. In 2017 across the UK, 24% of all identified or suspected victims of trafficking were missing from care - 246 of 1,015.²²

The link between running away and child sexual exploitation is well documented and over time responses to missing episodes have developed awareness and established best practice.²³ One of the key points made by Louise Casey's 'Reflections on child sexual exploitation' is that "the victims are children however they present themselves".²⁴

This APPG's analysis of criminal exploitation in March 2017 remains relevant today, and is worth considering in light of its current Inquiry: "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".²⁵

A recent serious case review found that children subject to criminal exploitation and violence continue to risk being identified as criminals instead of victims by social workers and the criminal justice system.²⁶ In that case, despite going missing for a week and returning with "a number of high value possessions", no Return Interview was offered to the 14 year old boy. Months later, he was murdered in gang violence. The familiar refrain of exploited young people is that "once you get yourself into county lines, it's hard to get out", and we must consider where services and policing may be making that escape even more difficult.²⁷

Young people being exploited in County Lines are likely to also be being trafficked, as their travel is arranged or facilitated for the purpose of them being exploited. The National Police Chief's Council and partners suggest that boys aged 14 to 17 are the most often targeted, however girls and children as young as often 10 are targeted too.²⁸ These ages correlate with NYAS data on the likelihood of children going missing from care placements.

NYAS welcomes the Home Office's awareness campaign and promotional materials on county lines.²⁹ However more needs to be done to achieve cultural change in the way we view young people being criminally exploited. The Children's Society is dealing with an increasing number of criminal cases against young people caught up in county lines who are only identified as trafficking victims at the point that the charity intervenes.³⁰ While identification is one issue, response is another: there are currently concerns over Government funding cuts to advocacy services for trafficked children.³¹

Child criminal exploitation can also occur through the use of technology, and so does not always require physical contact. This means that interventions, whether in response to a missing episode or not, must adapt to identify and act upon the risks of the digital world.³²

The true scale of county lines related crime and abuse remains an evidence gap.³³ NYAS will be improving data and developing new projects to address this gap, with a particular emphasis on risks facing care-experienced young people and those missing from placements.

6b. Child Vulnerability

In 2017 the Home Office listed the following factors heightening young people's vulnerability to county lines exploitation, which are highly relevant for the Inquiry to consider:³⁴

- Having prior experience of neglect, physical and/or sexual abuse.

- Lack of a safe/stable home environment, now or in the past (domestic violence or parental substance misuse, mental health issues or criminality, for example).
- Social isolation or social difficulties.
- Economic vulnerability.
- Homelessness or insecure accommodation status.
- Connections with other people involved in gangs.
- Having a physical or learning disability.
- Having mental health or substance misuse issues.
- Being in care (particularly those in residential care and those with interrupted care histories).
- Being excluded from mainstream education, in particular attending a Pupil Referral Unit.

These are useful indicators for the inquiry to consider, as they also generally relate to the likelihood of missing episodes too.

A further helpful illustration of this was developed by the *NSPCC* and *Action for Children*, who hypothesised how neglect may increase the risk of child sexual exploitation. A flowchart was designed in 2016 which we have referenced and reproduced in full in *Annex A* (see page 17).³⁵ Again, this may be useful as it identifies many of the themes that connect missing episodes with risk of exploitation.

7. Return Interview Case Studies

As well as the young people themselves, Return Interviewers will be a crucial resource for this inquiry to consult, due to their unique frontline role. NYAS Return Interviewers would welcome the opportunity to give oral evidence to the Inquiry, or meet with any members of the committee to discuss their role and insights.

We have included a number of case studies below to illustrate a small sample of the issues currently facing young people who go missing from care. Not all of these examples involve 'out of area' placements, but the risks they face during missing episodes appear to be broadly similar. They are told from the point of view of the NYAS Return Interviewer and the names of young people have been changed.

CASE STUDY A – Young person falling victim to County Lines exploitation

Adam, a 16 year old child in need, went missing from his parent's home for 49 days. Adam said he had been asked repeatedly by another young person who lived in his block, Ben, to "Come and make money". Adam had always said he had no interest. On the day Adam went missing threats were made by Ben and he was told to follow him to help with "selling clothes". They travelled from London for over two hours to a smaller city, where they stayed with a man who Adam did not know.

Despite expecting to sell clothes, Adam was forced to sell cannabis. He was not allowed to go home for 49 days. Adam was given £500 for selling cannabis but refused to take it, stating "I don't want nothing to do with this". Adam said he had given all information to

police and his social worker, but also claimed that as a result of his missing episode he was not allowed back at school.

As the interviewer, I met with Adam and he engaged well in the interview. He was able to openly discuss what happened to him during the missing period and identify what he wanted in the future. In agreement with Adam, I recommended that the family be relocated for their safety, which has now happened. I also recommended that the local authority support him to get back into education, which the social worker is working with him to do. The social worker has since worked with the police to investigate the risks around the other young person, Ben, who drew him into county lines drug dealing. The boy's parent was offered support and signposting was given to both about organisations that could help them move forward.

CASE STUDY B – Young person at risk of sexual exploitation

I was referred the case of a 17 year old, Caroline. She had gone missing from her accommodation, which had 24-hour staffing because she was considered 'high risk'. Delivering that first Return Interview, little did I know that there would be over a dozen more to come. Missing episodes were a regular occurrence for Caroline, and it quickly became clear that her time away involved drugs, alcohol and sexual exploitation.

In our Return Interviews, I was always clear that anything Caroline told me would be included in my report and shared with her social worker. Over time we built a very good working relationship, she became much more open and told me of names and locations that could be shared at the local Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) meetings. This led directly to police enquiries.

After returning from time missing, Caroline would insist that she would only speak to me. She began to go missing less often and for less time. One day we had our last Return Interview. I didn't know it was the last at the time, but no call came since. Over time Caroline stopped going missing from home. I often wonder where she is now and hope her life has become more fulfilling for her.

CASE STUDY C – Young person feeling isolated

Danielle, a 17 year old living in a Residential Children's Home, was going missing to meet up with young men who she was making initial contact with via the internet. This even resulted in one assault. I interviewed Danielle five times and was able to give advice on internet safety as well as general safety. The young person did take on board the message and for a period the missing episodes stopped. She did not meet with any males from this time.

As Danielle is soon turning 18 she was recently moved into a semi-independent placement, where she reports feeling isolated. The placement move preparing for leaving care has unfortunately resulted in Danielle going missing again; three times in the last three months. The last interview identified that she has now started to drink alcohol as a means of passing the time. I have highlighted these issues with the social worker and am pursuing support for Danielle with education, employment or training as a matter of urgency.

CASE STUDY D – Young person not wishing to be tracked

Emily was placed 'out of area' when she was 16 years old, and over a period of 10 months she went missing five times. Emily was classed as being vulnerable to CSE and easily led, so it was very concerning that each time she went missing her phone would be switched off and staff at her placement would be unable to make contact with her.

On the first four occasions that she went missing, Emily refused to speak to anyone from NYAS. Eventually she changed her mind and I went to interview her. Emily, by now 17 years old, claimed that she was still being treated like a child and that her curfew times at the placement were too early. She had no intention of stopping the missing episodes. Emily claimed that she would get into the same amount of trouble if she missed her curfew deadline, so once she knew she was going to miss it then there was no reason to hurry back. Emily also said that it irritated her that the staff always wanted to know her business; where she was going, who she was going to be with and what time she would be back.

I told Emily that even though I am an adult, my family would ask me the same questions. I explained that people do that to make sure that they will know if you are late or might be in trouble. Also that if I knew that I was going to be late that I would call the people waiting at home for me, so that they wouldn't worry and just as a courtesy.

I went over the keeping yourself safe section of the interview form and asked Emily if she ever called her placement when she was out late. Emily said no and that she also turned off her phone so that no one could track her. I explained that tracking someone through their phone is not straightforward or an easy thing to organise, that permissions must be obtained and legal processes applied before a phone could be traced. I told Emily that by staying out of touch and switching her phone off she was not showing the staff at her placement that she could be responsible and keep herself safe, which was what they were concerned about. That she would have a better chance of being treated like an adult if she started to show the staff that she could be responsible and at least called or texted them to let them know that she was safe and well. Also that if Emily made sure that she got back before her curfew for an agreed period of time then the placement might agree to relax her curfew.

Emily did listen and worked things out with the staff at her placement. She now keeps in contact when she is out, calls if she's going to be back a bit late and has not been reported missing again for almost six months.

8. What needs to improve? Recommendations

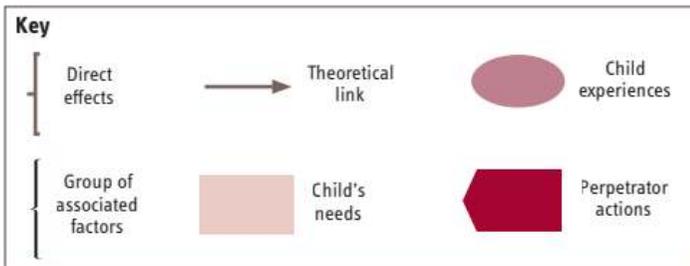
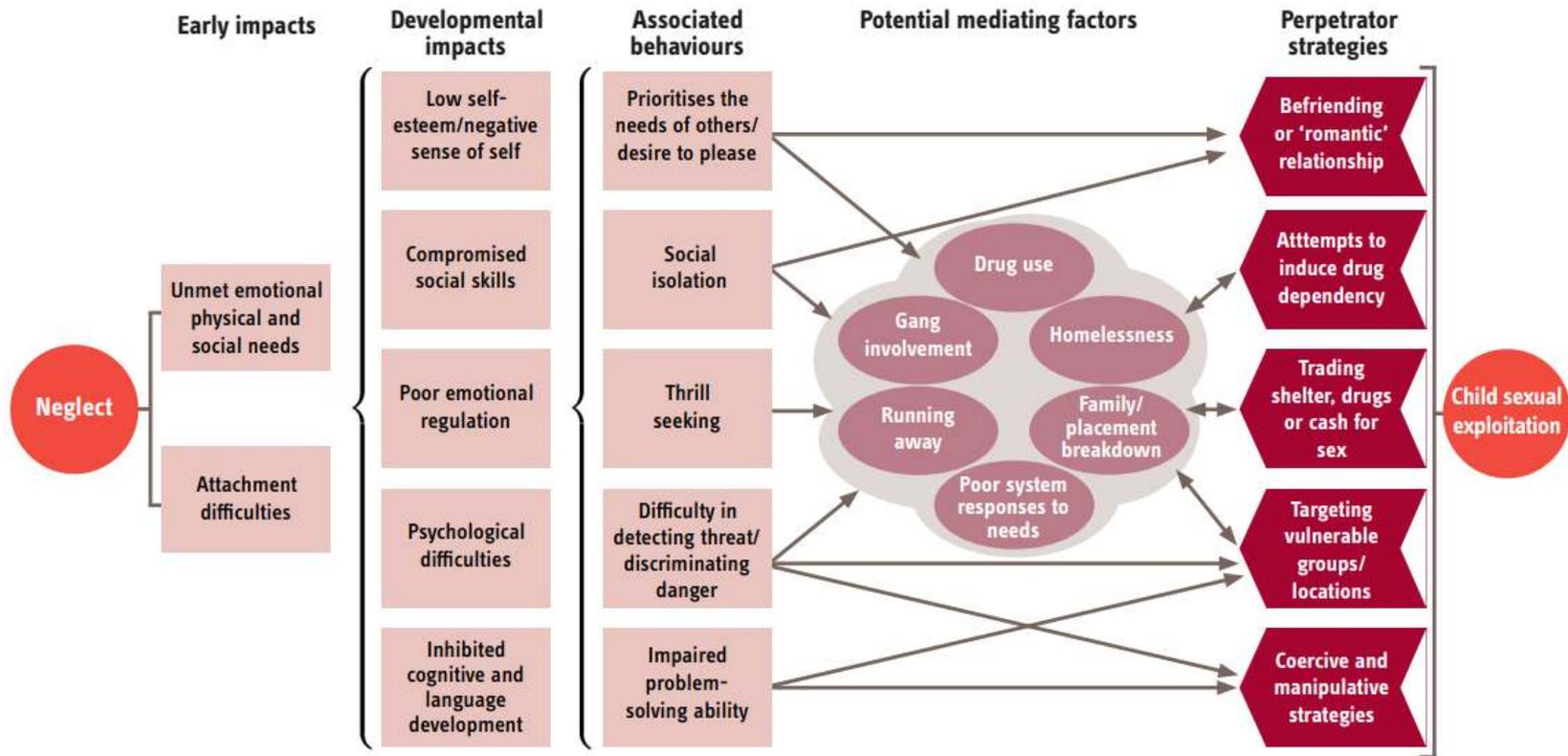
1	<p>The child's wishes and feelings must be taken into account in decisions made about their placement and their lives. While the child's wishes and feelings may on occasion be incompatible with their best interests, it is important that they have the opportunity to voice their concerns and have their views taken seriously. This will also help to overcome the most common 'push' factor we encounter in missing episodes: the breakdown of communication. Independent advocacy services can support young people to express their wishes and feelings and empower their voices to be heard.</p>
2	<p>Children must not be placed 'out of area' because of financial pressures taking priority over their best interests. 'Out of area' placements in Residential Children's Homes should only be increasing in line with any policy or evidence that this is in the child's best interest. In considering submissions of evidence to this Inquiry, we look forward to seeing the APPG assessment of factors driving the increase in 'out of area' placements. This assessment should be done in light of both best interests <i>and</i> the child's wishes and feelings.</p>
3	<p>All Return Interviews must be conducted by a professional who is genuinely independent of the local authority. Statutory guidance demands someone who is 'independent', but does not clarify the meaning of the word. Latest data gathered by the Children's Society suggests that the majority of Local Authorities still use their own staff to conduct Return Interviews.³⁶ While they may or may not be from a different department to social workers, they are still in the employment of the Local Authority and therefore the Corporate Parent. This is a direct conflict of interest where known best practice could be better supported by Government guidance.</p>
4	<p>Social workers, police, courts and youth offending teams must be trained to recognise and treat victims of Child Criminal Exploitation as victims rather than criminals. We urge local partners to develop diversion options as alternatives to criminalising children in care and care leavers. Government guidance should support local areas to develop or expand upon diversion options, particularly in recognising issues of exploitation or trauma that disproportionately affect care-experienced young people.</p>
5	<p>Local authority and police prevention teams should target local schools to build resilience and reduce vulnerability in children. Children who have adverse childhood experiences and live within certain areas, or children with multiple indicators of neglect, could be at greater risk of exploitation throughout their life. Therefore early-intervention should focus on primary schools in engaging and age-appropriate ways. Resilience in children is a key protective factor in reducing their vulnerability and could reduce the likelihood of risky behaviours such as missing episodes.</p>

6	<p>Government guidance should champion ‘Contextual Safeguarding’ in Child Protection and the response to missing episodes. Child Protection currently focuses on risks in the home from family and factors in the home to change or build upon. Assessing for CSE or County Lines needs to be different. Many risk factors may be nothing to do with home life which can cause a blind spot for social workers. Rather than focusing on the family setting, a new assessment process is being piloted which looks at wider factors, including people, institutions and the physical environment, as locations of potential risk and harm.³⁷ ‘Contextual Safeguarding’ should be embedded in Local Authority training and approaches, with consistency ensured through clear Government guidance. Developing a form of ‘early help assessment’ with reference to ‘Contextual Safeguarding’ would enable the right support to be given to families where children are going missing or at risk of exploitation.</p>
7	<p>Department for Education statistics on children missing from care should include whether their placement is ‘in borough’ or ‘out of area’. That information would be useful for comparisons between outcomes, and make it easier to track changing trends. It would also be useful if national data honed down to different placement types, to more clearly demonstrate the likelihood and risks of missing episodes in secure units, children’s homes and semi-independent living arrangements.</p>



ANNEX A

Figure 1: Hypothesised model of how neglect *may* increase vulnerability to CSE



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