

Children missing from placements outside of their home locality

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Overview

Where children and young people are not placed in their home locality the risks they face can escalate and potentially increase their risk of exploitation. This can be particularly so for children and young people aged 16 plus who may be placed in unregulated placements that are at a distance from their home locality and away their family networks, friendship groups, familiar surroundings and local resources.

Headline:

Placement availability will always be a factor. The important factor is that placements should be matched and based on assessed needs and ability to meet these. This should consider the young person's wishes and feelings and all placements should meet the standards expected within the relevant regulation and considering Ofsted inspections and the literature provided by the person offering the accommodation. For unregulated placements information can be provided by the Total Placement Service.

Placing outside of the home locality may be of benefit for some young people and provide the opportunity for additional safeguarding measures to be put in place. Where this is an Out of Local Authority placement the other local authority must be notified of any placements in their area. In such circumstances a 'core offer' letter should be provided by the host Local Authority giving details of resources including health and education and any pertinent issues. This local knowledge can be utilised to ensure that placements are being made in both appropriate establishments and areas that are safe and suitable for young people.

Placing at a distance can bring its own challenges in establishing and maintaining relationships with the young person, having regular contact, knowing the local provision and building local professional networks. This should be factored in along a plan to address these issues. Make it your business to know the local provision and demographics that may impact on the child or young person.

Key points

When a young person goes missing social workers should adopt the same principles as they do when a young person goes missing from a local placement. These include:

- Where missing from placement is a concern ensuring a Missing Response Plan is in place including completion of a return interview within 72 hours and any push and pull factors this may highlight.
- Listen to the voice of the child or young person to gain insight and understanding into antecedents for missing episodes.
- Involve young people in planning and decision making in their lives.
- Consider the planning for the young person within each statutory review meeting and respond to challenge and any drift and delay in the child's plan.
- Consider any risk assessment, missing persons meetings and strategy meetings that have been held and that safeguarding plans consider contextual safeguarding.
- Ensure any agreed actions are completed within the relevant timescale and that any plans are routinely reviewed to ensure they are purposeful.
- Contact the young person between face to face visits and reviews utilising a variety of suitable contact methods i.e. phone/text/apps
- Consider contacting the young person during the missing episode as some young people may be willing to talk.
- Ensure that resources that have been commissioned such as additional staffing, waking night staff, education etc are being delivered.
- Have sight of Logbooks/records, incident reports and logs, children/young people's individual records, risk assessments and plans held by the provider.