



Department
for Education

Launch date 25 June 2013
Respond by 17 September 2013
Ref: Department for Education

Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care

Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care

The current statutory guidance on *Children Who Run Away and Go Missing from Home or Care* was published in July 2009. The guidance needs to be updated to reflect: widespread concerns about children in care being sexually exploited; changes in policy, such as the requirement of national indicator 71 which no longer applies; and recent changes in statutory guidance (Care planning and Working Together).

The Government has therefore decided to produce a new version of the statutory guidance on *Children Who Run Away and Go Missing from Home or Care* to reflect these changes. The guidance will also include flow charts to make clearer the actions required of local agencies and carers when a child goes missing from home or care.

This consultation seeks the views of Local Authorities, representative bodies and other interested parties on the content of the guidance and flow charts.

To Local Authorities, representative bodies and other interested parties

Issued 25 June 2013

Enquiries To If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation you can contact the Department on 0370 000 2288

e-mail: Missing.CONULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk

Contact Details

If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the Ministerial and Public Communications Division by e-mail: consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk or by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the Department's '[Contact Us](#)' page.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Looked after children are particularly vulnerable and recent evidence indicates that they are disproportionately at risk of grooming and sexual exploitation. In order to safeguard them effectively, it is crucial that there is clarity and consistency about who should do what when a looked after child goes missing, and how data and actions should be recorded.
- 1.2 The statutory guidance *Children Who Run Away and Go Missing from Home or Care* was published in July 2009. This guidance is now out of date. There are no new requirements on local authorities as a result of the draft revised guidance, but there is a greater focus on key areas, such as data sharing, return home interviews and risk assessments.
- 1.3 The new draft guidance:
- is just over 20 pages long, a third of the current guidance of 62 pages;
 - is clearer on the key actions local agencies should be undertaking; and
 - has been developed in consultation with a range of partners.

2 Background

- 2.1 The recent spate of court cases including Rochdale and Oxford, the inquiry of the APPG and the report of the Office of the Children's Commissioner on Child Sexual Exploitation in gangs, all highlighted the vulnerability of children in care who go missing from their placement. The recent Ofsted thematic report on *Missing Children* published in February 2013 highlighted that some local authorities were inconsistent in applying and meeting the requirements of the statutory guidance *Children Who Run Away and Go Missing from Home or Care* (2009). Local authorities should conduct a self-evaluation and establish an action plan. They should also review their processes and procedures within six months.

3 What are the main changes?

- 3.1 The reference to National Indicator 71 has been removed in line with Government policy on reducing key performance indicators for local authorities.

- 3.2 The reference to Contact Point has been removed to reflect government policy.
- 3.3 Changes have been made to the sections on children in care to reflect changes made in the revised Care Planning Statutory Guidance in 2011.
- 3.4 The other changes have been made in line with general DfE policy to focus on core legal requirements, making it clear what individuals and organisations should do to keep children safe.
- 3.5 The guidance is intended to provide a national framework within which agencies and professionals at local level individually and jointly can draw up and agree on their own ways of working together to prevent and safeguard children who go missing from care.

4 How To Respond

- 4.1 Consultation responses can be completed online at www.education.gov.uk/consultations

by emailing Missing.CONSULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk

or by downloading a response form which should be completed and sent to:
Xane Panayiotou, 1st Floor, Children in Care, Department for Education,
Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT

5 Additional Copies

- 5.1 Additional copies are available electronically and can be downloaded from the Department for Education e-consultation website at: www.education.gov.uk/consultations

6 Plans for making results public

- 6.1 The Government plans to publish the new statutory guidance shortly after the consultation ends.