

Sexually Exploited Young People

Background

In its recent report, CEOP (2011) highlighted the link between children who go missing and child sexual exploitation.¹ Both the cross government strategy on missing children and adults,² and the national action plan on tackling child sexual exploitation³ recognise the respective links between these two areas.

Missing People is ideally placed to support victims of sexual exploitation through the confidential, independent nature of our services. Our helpline is an acceptable option for young people who have become detached from family and statutory services; a common experience for those who have gone missing and/or have been sexually exploited.

This project seeks to safeguard children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation and support those who are being sexually exploited.

Development

Many sexually exploited or at-risk young people already benefit from Missing People's services. In the FY 2011-12 the charity supported 111 children and young people who were identified as being at risk of sexual exploitation.

Missing People's capacity to support victims of sexual exploitation was recognised by 'Safe & Sound' in Derby during *Operation Retriever*, when Missing People provided a national crisis response helpline for young people following the exposure of a major child sexual exploitation ring. 'Just Whistle' provided training for staff and volunteers, whilst the details of the helpline were issued by the media as the recommended source of support for anyone affected.

The charity's developing relationship with CEOP will serve to bring Missing People to the forefront of activity around missing and sexually exploited children.

The Project

The overarching aim of this Comic Relief funded project is to protect more children through increased awareness of the link between missing and sexual exploitation. In addition the project aims to increase the national capacity for Missing People to safeguard young people who are missing and sexually exploited or at high risk of sexual exploitation and going missing.

In order to achieve this the project will:

- Extend the capacity of Missing People's helpline to ensure that a child or young person who is being sexually exploited or who is at risk of sexual exploitation has someone who can support them in making decisions to stay safe

¹ CEOP (2011), *Out of Mind, Out of Sight*

² Home Office (2011), *Missing Children and Adults; A Cross Government Strategy*

³ Department for Education (2011), *Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation; Action Plan*

- Extend expertise and influence to provide a clear knowledge base, linking missing and sexual exploitation in practice to deliver tools to enable LSCBs to provide better outcomes for children at risk.
- Syndicate with members of the National Working Group (NWG) for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People around the UK to provide safe and secure information-sharing when a child goes missing and may be subject to internal trafficking.

Project outputs

Key project outputs will include:

- Increased support for children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation or experiencing sexual exploitation
- Development of an information sharing protocol to safeguard missing and sexually exploited young people
- A research report on the links between missing, sexual exploitation and trafficking
- Identification and sharing of local best practice

Project outcomes

The intended outcomes of the project are:

- Fewer young people will be sexually exploited or trafficked
- More sexually exploited and/or trafficked young people understand their situation, know their rights and have access to the support they need, with at-risk young people equally well informed
- More sexually exploited and/or trafficked young people will have increased choice to make positive decisions about their futures

Evaluation

Missing People will monitor the number of calls it receives from children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation for the duration of the funding period. We will identify and monitor emerging patterns and trends in the numbers of children and young people reaching out to the charity who are at risk of sexual exploitation.

The impact of national advocacy work will be evaluated by monitoring Missing People's influencing activity and assessing how the issue of missing is understood and factored into policy and practice at both national and local level as a result.

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For more information on the project, please email policyandresearch@missingpeople.org.uk
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