



MISSING IN LONDON

Meeting the needs of young people who run away

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1. Executive summary

Young people who run away from home are often invisible to services because of a failure to interpret their behaviour as a possible indicator of being in need. They may already be 'looked after' and, as a result of repeated missing episodes, may be labelled as a 'repeat runaway' or 'persistent absconder'. The location of the problem in the young person's identity, rather than in the context in which their behaviour is occurring can act to obscure risk and need, delaying intervention and the provision of appropriate support.

Some running away behaviour is a cause for serious concern and requires a professional response. In addition, persistent or prolonged episodes of running away may threaten positive outcomes for a young person in the longer term, increasing their risk of 'detachment' and social exclusion into adulthood.

This report identifies that, contrary to Government guidance, the needs of young people who run away in London are not yet being systematically addressed. It makes a series of recommendations in order to firmly locate the development of structures and service responses on a local borough level, in order that young people at risk through running away become 'visible' to children and young people's services and that appropriate interventions are enacted.

Aims of the project

This work was commissioned by the Association of London Government (ALG) on behalf of key stakeholders including the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the London Refuge, representatives of local authorities and voluntary sector service providers in London. It was undertaken between November 2005 and July 2006.

The aim was to evaluate strategic and service provision for young people who run away in London in order to inform a consistent and pan London response to this issue.

The objectives of this work were threefold:

- To investigate the national context in terms of the key issues affecting young people who run away, the policy context and government response to these issues and the evidence base for effective services working with these children and young people.
- To identify statutory and voluntary sector responses to the issue of running away in London by exploring service provision in five London boroughs.
- To evaluate the role of the London Refuge and assess its potential contribution to a pan London strategy.

Qualitative data was collected through face to face interviews, telephone interviews and group workshops. In total we consulted with 78 stakeholders including service representatives from the statutory and voluntary sectors.

KEY FINDINGS

Incidence of running away in London

Statistical data (see appendix 3) provided by the Metropolitan Police for the financial year 2005-6 provides information on 16,137 missing incidents for young people under the age of 18 across the 32 London boroughs. Of these:

- Just over one half were female
- One quarter were under the age of 14 years
- Less than 1% (n= 127) remain unsolved at the point of enquiry

1. Preventing running away

Taking the lead – strategic responsibility

A clear local police lead with responsibility for young missing persons has been achieved through the location of Missing Person's Units in each of the Borough Commands and the identification of staff to lead on missing incidents concerning children and young people. The work of the Missing Person's Units is overseen and monitored by Operation Compass which provides direct support for frontline borough-based colleagues across London and shares best practice across the boroughs.

We found that Government guidance with regard to the designation of a senior officer within children's services, to monitor and report missing incidents and plan services for young people running away, has not been fully or universally implemented. Although some local procedures specified that reviews of services to children missing from care or home should be undertaken on an annual basis, it was not always clear with whom that responsibility rested.

Data Management

Police data

It is not possible to establish the true incidence of young people going missing. Incidents are under reported to the police particularly where a young person has been forced to leave. On the other hand, over-counting occurs because missing incidents are recorded rather than the number of children they relate to. There is currently no requirement for figures to be systematically recorded or reported on an annual basis. The Metropolitan Police Service is seeking to improve recording systems and is introducing new search facilities in order to be able to produce a variety of statistical data.

Children and young people's services data

Very little data is available concerning the incidence of young people going missing from care. Where it is available it is not possible to disaggregate genuine 'missing' incidents from unauthorised absence. This means that the data cannot be used to inform future service planning or differentiate young people who are at risk. The practice of reporting late return or unauthorised absence overloads the police with missing reports that are time intensive and divert resources inappropriately.

Data regarding the incidence of young people running away from home is not available from children's services. Information is dependent on the way that frontline services record and monitor referrals and outcomes and without very clear recording systems, with specific categories for missing incidents, this data proves too difficult to extract. Notification of a missing incident to children's services is not usually a sufficient trigger for a service response.

Independent return interviews

Where there is no specialist service for young people running away, independent return interviews are not being offered. Where there are specialist projects these are undertaken routinely and examples show that they can be an effective tool for picking up on risk that may not be identified through the duty and assessment system.

Approaches to early intervention

There are currently insufficient early intervention services in place. The Common Assessment Framework combined with the early warning systems that are being developed through multi-agency panels should ensure that risk indicators are identified earlier. Local authorities are now in various stages of developing integrated services and joint forums aimed at providing more preventative approaches. Some models have been successful in broadening the agenda from preventing young people getting into trouble with the law, to ensuring early intervention for vulnerable young people and those at risk.

Cross borough co-operation

Cross borough co-operation is an important mechanism for developing sensitivity to risk issues for young people. The convening of cross borough and multi-agency fora enable a level of information exchange and cross referencing that is otherwise not possible and which have a valuable role to play in identifying the links between risky activity and young people running away, in the development of pan London approaches to the issue.

2. Responding to running away

Immediate safety and specialist support

Very few specialist resources exist for young people running away. Where they do exist, they appear to be highly effective in raising awareness of the vulnerability of young people that run away and in co-ordinating effective inter-agency responses to the issue. The London Refuge, as a six bed residential unit with refuge status is currently the only provision that offers emergency accommodation and support.

Accessing services and threshold criteria

Vulnerable young people can be invisible if they do not meet the threshold criteria for children's services. Often family support services can only be accessed through the frontline 'gateway' to services and there are too few preventative services available to fill the gap.

Young people refusing to go home are particularly at risk. Although there is little evidence of rough sleeping young people put themselves in other risky situations – staying with friends, unknown adults or other vulnerable young adults in hostels.

Inter-agency co-operation

Where specialist projects exist there is evidence of effective inter agency arrangements that facilitate good information exchange and further the safeguarding agenda. These services achieve a balance between respecting the wishes of the young person and ensuring their protection whilst nurturing helpful relationships between the police, social services, other specialist services and child protection.

3. Longer term intervention and support

Follow up and family support services

We found little evidence of support being available to young people and their families following a missing incident or to help prevent repeat running, except for those provided by specialist services. These tend to be relatively short interventions and some young people and families need longer term support.

It is hoped that the creation of preventative 'safety nets' for young people falling below the threshold for section 17 (Children Act 1989) services will assist in providing early interventions and prevent the need for more acute services.

Support to 16-17 year olds

The LSCB Missing Procedure covers young people up until the age of 18. Young people aged 16 to 18 can be additionally vulnerable as they are very unlikely to meet the threshold criteria for children's services intervention.

There has been some development around 'family mediation' services for young people 16 and over since the inclusion of 16 and 17 year olds as a priority need group in the homeless legislation (Homeless Act 2000). However, we identified that, used in this way, mediation can often be used solely as a tool for homelessness prevention rather than as a means of helping young people to resolve family issues and achieve other outcomes for young people for whom a return home is not possible or desirable.

The London Refuge

The role of the Refuge as a safety net for some very vulnerable young people is undisputed. It provides a high quality service for young people which is clearly valued by them and their parents as well as other practitioners and service providers who support young people who run away.

However, there are inherent difficulties in providing a centrally located resource of this kind. These include the challenging marketing implications of raising awareness and encouraging the use of the resource by local authorities across Greater London. Emergency residential accommodation is costly and resource intensive in comparison with foster care and local authorities are reluctant to fund the Refuge as a London resource. This, combined with the cessation of Government funding in January 2007, unfortunately renders its continued existence as a refuge untenable. However, in the short term, its role remains pivotal to the eventual development of alternative resources provided at the local level and the proposed interim arrangements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **A local strategy is developed in response to a local assessment of need, to support young people who run away.** This links in firmly with the inter-agency structures being formed within children's trusts to facilitate new approaches to early intervention. This strategy is used to provide a safety net for young people running away from home and should include local arrangements for emergency accommodation, independent return interviews and packages of follow up support. This work should reduce the need for longer term and more specialist children's services.
2. **A member of the Local Children's Safeguarding Board should be identified to assume responsibility within the local authority for young people at risk through**

running away. This will be a strategic role to oversee the development of integral structures and services which identify and support their needs on a local level. This role should be included in LCSB guidance.

3. **As recommended in the Department of Health good practice guidance, a senior designated lead is identified within each local authority, with responsibility for the collection of data with regard to missing episodes and the planning and monitoring of services to young people that run away from care and from home.** This officer will act as the key contact within local partnerships and report regularly to the local Corporate Parenting Board in respect of missing incidents from care. The role of senior designated lead should be included in LCSB guidance.
4. **This senior officer to consider introducing an additional role at practitioner level with responsibility for co-ordinating the 'risk' assessment process and service response to young people that run away.** The location of this 'Missing Children Co-ordinator' may vary between statutory or voluntary sector services according to local structures. This may be a dedicated or partial post depending on local need and circumstances
5. **Local identification and action systems should be introduced through the use of risk assessments that are integral to inter-agency missing procedures in line with the (draft) pan London LSCB procedure for safeguarding missing children.** These identify young people for whom running away is an indication of need or who are putting themselves at risk by running away.
6. **Each local authority should work towards the development of local resources in order to provide immediate safety in the form of emergency accommodation and support to young people who require it under Section 51 (Children Act).** The level of resources provided should be determined by the local assessment of need and based upon police and local authority data regarding the local incidence of running away. Flexible arrangements should be developed between boroughs to facilitate the use of each others' refuge resources where young people have travelled across local authority boundaries, to minimise the need for travel in emergency
7. **Effective transitional arrangements are introduced to ensure that a crisis intervention and support service is provided to young people in the interim.** These are achieved as follows:

7.1A working party is formed to oversee, steer and implement these recommendations, comprised of representatives of the ALG, GOL, local authorities, NGO's and Metropolitan Police Service

7.2 An interim 'virtual refuge' service is created, reflecting best practice derived from the national pilots. This will be a jointly commissioned and pan London service. Accommodation may be provided by St. Christopher's utilising a combination of its existing residential and foster care provision across London. This will replace the current Refuge service and costs saved on that service may be re-invested in the interim service

7.3 Central funding is extended in order that the Refuge might continue with its current service until other transitional arrangements are in place and in so doing continue to meet the needs of young people requiring immediate safety and support. This will be necessary until spring 2007.

8. **A Central Support Service should be developed to support the practical implementation of the strategy at a local level.** Given the considerable skill and experience developed by the London Refuge service in supporting both young people and also practitioners in the key issues surrounding running away we suggest that existing Refuge managers and staff would be most appropriately qualified to provide the necessary support functions, as below.

These may include:

- Monitoring the implementation of the LSCB London Procedure by collating and analysing data received from local authorities in respect of young people missing from care and from home
- Providing support and advice to local authorities in the development of clusters of approved refuge providers
- Providing information, advice and support to foster carers as approved refuge providers
- Linking with the national Childline service to provide advice and information through Childline as required to young people needing to access emergency 'running away' services.
- Delivering joint training to Missing Children Co-ordinators and Missing Person's Unit Officers
- Providing centralised training for local authority and children's trust practitioners that support young people who run away.
- Providing a helpline for practitioners
- Developing and managing a website with accessible information about the London procedure, facts and figures about missing children, identifying risks and risk indicators etc.
- Delivering an annual event to provide a London overview of development and share good practice.

9. **The London Safeguarding Children Board to negotiate with ChildLine on behalf of local authorities over the new arrangements for central support services.**

Please see main report for the Forward Strategy and Action Plan.

2. Introduction

This work was commissioned by the Association of London Government (ALG) on behalf of key stakeholders including the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the London Refuge, representatives of local authorities and voluntary sector service providers in London. It was undertaken between November 2005 and July 2006.

2.1 Aims and objectives

2.1.1 The aim of this research was to evaluate strategic and service provision for young people who run away in London in order to inform a consistent and pan London response to this issue. It considers how best to ensure that vulnerable young people who go missing are protected and gain access to the appropriate services.

2.1.2 The objectives of this work were threefold:

- To investigate the national context in terms of the key issues affecting young people who run away, the policy context and government response to these issues and the evidence base for effective services working with these children and young people.
- To identify statutory and voluntary sector responses to the issue of running away in London by exploring service provision in five London boroughs.
- To evaluate the role of the London Refuge and assess its potential contribution to a pan London strategy

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The work was steered by a Project Board with representatives of the ALG, DfES, local authority Children and Young People's Services, the Metropolitan Police Service, the NSPCC, London Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and the Greater London Association of Directors of Social Services (GLADSS). The Board met three times over the course of the project and additional written updates were provided by the research team as required.

2.2.2 The research methodology involved five key stages:

- Desk research into the policy and legislative framework for meeting the needs of young people running away and a review of existing research literature relating to the issue and the effectiveness of services provided to young people.
- An exploration of the service interventions currently being tested by the Government through community refuge schemes, in order to identify a range of alternative models of intervention.
- A mapping exercise of services by provided by local authorities and local voluntary sector organisations in the five boroughs of Westminster, Islington, Camden, Lambeth and Redbridge.
- A data collection exercise was undertaken in order to provide a snapshot picture of young people coming to the attention of the police or local authorities as missing or having run away over the month of February 2006, in the five boroughs participating in the case study.
- An initial snapshot evaluation of the service provided by the London Refuge followed by an assessment of its role within the London context based upon the findings from the borough mapping exercise.

- 2.2.3 This was a qualitative research project. Data was primarily collected through face to face or telephone interviews using semi-structured schedules, which allowed for in depth and detailed exploration current provision, barriers to effective service delivery, gaps in service provision and suggestions for more effective responses to the issues. These interviews were recorded verbatim as far as was possible and written up immediately following the interview. In total we carried out face to face interviews with 49 people either in individual interviews or occasionally in small group interviews and conducted 19 telephone interviews. In addition we undertook a group workshop with 10 staff from the London Refuge.
- 2.2.4 Documents relating to local policy and procedure were also examined, as were data monitoring reports relating to the incidence of running away. Any available data with regard to the views of young people using services was also examined along with service evaluation reports and statistical data regarding service use.
- 2.2.5 Two main difficulties emerged with respect to the methods used. The first was securing interviews with key informants within the relatively short timescale. This was time and resource intensive; however, this method provided richer information than would have been gathered through the use of questionnaires. The second was in respect of the collection of statistical data regarding the incidence of running away. This is because there are inadequate recording and data management systems in place within local authority services.

Section One: The National Context

3. Young people that run away

This section describes the key terms and definitions used in relation to young people that run away. It then describes those at particular risk and considers the differential needs of some groups within the general population.

3.1 Defining terms and issues

3.1.1 This report addresses the needs of children and young people who are at risk through 'running away', being 'forced to leave' or 'staying away' from their normal place of residence, be that their family home or care placement.

3.1.2 Young people in such situations are usually referred to as 'missing' or having 'run away'. These terms are often used interchangeably, but this can be misleading for the following reasons:

- When an absence is reported to the police, young people are generally referred to as 'missing', however not *all* young people that run away are reported, and this is particularly the case for those living at home¹.
- The category of 'missing' describes a broader group than those who have 'run away' and includes children and young people who have been lost or abducted or cannot be found for some other reason. Many of the children reported to be 'missing' will be found, or return of their own accord, within hours.
- Young people who are "looked after" may be reported as 'missing' as a precautionary measure if they fail to return to their placement on time. These young people could not be described as having run away and often their whereabouts may be known or suspected.²
- Some ambiguity is also raised by age because young people who are 16 and over are entitled to assistance from the welfare state with housing and income support. For the purposes of accessing support services these young people would commonly be described as homeless rather than as having 'run away'. Of course they may also have been reported as 'missing persons'.
- However, this is not the case for young people who are 'looked after' as the state has a duty of care until the age of 18, which effectively removes their financial welfare entitlement under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

3.1.3 The classification of adults as 'missing' poses moral and philosophical issues about the rights of an individual to deliberately leave one living situation for another. In general, it is those that have been 'left' that use this definition rather than the absentee, and this is an important issue for the police in determining the appropriate response,³ bearing in mind the need to balance an individual's right and intentions with an assessment of risk to their personal safety and/or of their being a victim of crime.

¹ Rees, G and Lee, J (2005) Still Running 11: Findings from the Second National Survey of Young Runaways. The Children's Society

² Biehal, N and Wade, J (2002) Children Who Go Missing; Research, Policy and Practice. University of York.

³ Biehal, N., Mitchell, F and Wade, J. (2003) *Lost from View: Missing persons in the UK*. The Policy Press: Bristol

3.1.4 In the eyes of the law this issue does not arise with respect to children and young people, who remain the legal responsibility of an adult until the age of 16, and who therefore do not have the 'right' to absent themselves. However, it does raise an important point about how an individual defines their own actions, as, regardless of age or the law, young people do make decisions about leaving one situation for another without ever conceiving of themselves as 'going missing' or being 'a runaway.' As one young person succinctly put it: "How can I be missing when I know where I am?" Recent research finds that young people may not view themselves as running away so much as 'staying away' from home.⁴

3.1.5 A useful way of re-framing this issue might be to say that a young person is 'missing' until such time as their whereabouts is ascertained. In this way the 'outcome' provides a retrospective classification. Thus 'missing' is the umbrella term used until further information is available that facilitates some assessment of the absentee's level of vulnerability. This approach is particularly constructive in the investigation of missing persons as it keeps all possibilities open and cases 'live' and sensitive to 'risk'.

Use of the term 'young runaway'

3.1.6 The term 'runaway' is not used in this report for two reasons. The first is that it provides us with little additional information about a young person's circumstances. On the contrary, the label 'runaway' locates the problem in a young person's identity – they are a 'runaway' - without considering the context in which their behaviour is occurring. Ironically, it can therefore act to obscure need, and in so doing delay responsive action and the provision of appropriate support. This issue is particularly pertinent to young people who are 'looked after' and often labelled as 'repeat runaways' or persistent absconders.

3.1.7 The second is that the term 'runaway' denotes a cohort too wide and diverse to be very helpful in identifying risk or need. Estimates based on a national survey of nearly 13,000 young people conclude that approximately 11%, or one in nine young people across the UK run away overnight on at least one occasion before the age of 16⁵.

3.1.8 The majority of these young people will not present any significant cause for concern. Recent research estimates that the majority of young people running away every year are 13 to 15 year olds⁶ and in general, running away behaviour can be understood within a continuum of normal adolescent behaviour as a young person tests boundaries in the endeavour to negotiate and assert an independent identity.

3.1.9 However, some running away behaviour is a cause for serious concern and requires a professional response. This may be the case where a young person is especially vulnerable because they are very young, have additional support needs, where they are running away from an abusive or harmful environment and/or placing themselves in unsafe situations or locations. In addition, persistent or prolonged episodes of running away may threaten positive outcomes for a young person in the longer term, increasing the risk of 'detachment' and social exclusion into adulthood.

3.1.10 For this reason, running away behaviour should be viewed as a possible indicator that young people are in need of extra support, and as such should signal that further information is required. The challenge of developing a strategy is to find ways of ensuring that:

⁴ Rees, G., Franks, M., Raws, P. and Medforth, R (2005) *Responding to Young Runaways: An evaluation of 19 projects 2003 -2004*. London: DFES

⁵ Safe on the Streets Research Team (1999) *Still Running: Children on the Streets in the UK*. The Children's Society

⁶ Rees, G and Lee, J (2005) *Still Running 11: Findings from the Second National Survey of Young Runaways*. The Children's Society

1. Running away behaviour that is cause for concern comes to the attention of the relevant services
2. Appropriate responses are instigated in order to assess risk /need, and
3. Effective intervention is provided where necessary.

1.2 Patterns and causes

- 3.2.1 There are strong links between the quality of family relationships and running away or staying away.⁷ Conflict with parents or carers is reported as the most common cause of young people absenting themselves from home or care.
- 3.2.2 There is also a relationship between running away and family form: young people are more likely to run away from step families than from one parent families, and much less likely to run away from two parent families. Causes may lie in issues of conflict and separation with regard to the original family as well as in the formation of a reconstituted family.⁸
- 3.2.3 Some young people run away because they are experiencing neglect or abuse. Others because of domestic violence in the home or parental drug and alcohol misuse.
- 3.2.4 Younger children who run away for the first time under the age of 11 are more likely to develop patterns of running away behaviour.⁹
- 3.2.5 Young people in care are significantly more likely to run away than those who live at home, and over 50% of young people in care have run away at some time from care or home¹⁰ This is not to say that the care system necessarily *causes* young people to run away. In many cases persistent running away behaviour may have been established at an early age and may well have constituted a factor in the young person's admission to care. However, it is also the case that the culture and environment in care and in *some* residential units in particular, may reinforce running away behaviour or that it may be instigated through peer pressure or bullying behaviour.

3.3 Vulnerability and risk for distinct groups within the cohort

- 3.3.1 We believe that the following groups should be regarded as being at additional risks to the general cohort of young people who run away or stay away overnight on one or two occasions:
- Younger children i.e. those under the age of 11 or young people who have special needs because of their additional vulnerability. It is estimated that 25% of young people that repeatedly run away first ran away before the age of 11¹¹.
 - Young people who are experiencing neglect, abuse or exploitation or are witnessing domestic violence in the home and are consequently in need of additional support services.
 - Young people who are 'looked after' and are more likely to spend time with risky adults and/or in unsafe locations than other young people.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Rees, G and Rutherford, C. (2001) *Home Run: Families and Young Runaways*. The Children's Society.

⁹ Safe on the Streets Research Team (1999) *Still Running: Children on the Streets in the UK*. The Children's Society

¹⁰ Biehal, N and Wade, J (2002) *Children Who Go Missing; Research, Policy and Practice*. University of York.

¹¹ Safe on the Streets Research Team (1999) *Still Running: Children on the Streets in the UK*. The Children's Society

- Young people who are forced to leave home, as opposed to those who leave or stay away of their own accord, and those who are less likely to be reported missing or to access support services whilst away.
- Young people who have developed a pattern of repeated running away behaviour or who are away for prolonged periods of time. It is estimated that 12% of young people who run away do so more than 3 times.¹²
- Young people who are 15 and under and have left or been forced to leave home by parents or carers and subsequently become isolated from parents, carers or relatives or any other form of legitimate support. These young people are known as ‘detached’¹³ and are at an increased risk of poor educational outcomes and homelessness.
- There are additional vulnerabilities specifically for young people in the 14 to 16 age group. This is because there are fewer services available for them, they are harder to accommodate and have no access to independent financial support¹⁴. These young people are more likely to develop risky survival strategies as a result, and are at greater risk of becoming invisible to agencies and ultimately becoming ‘detached’.

3.3.2 For some of these groups there will be additional risks associated with running away behaviour, including:

- becoming involved in substance misuse
- going into care
- experiencing depression or other mental health issues
- becoming the victim of sexual abuse or exploitation
- getting into trouble with the law
- becoming ‘detached’

3.3.3 The risks for detached young people include:

- physical assault or sexual assault / exploitation
- staying with inappropriate adults
- being forced into drug use
- lack of food
- being exposed to extreme experiences
- feeling scared, worried or depressed
- homelessness in adulthood
- poor educational outcomes and reduced life chances.¹⁵

3.4 The differential needs of young people using/requiring access to services

3.4.1 The fact that young people run away for a variety of reasons and are exposed to different risks suggests that there are differential needs for support. A national evaluation of 19 support projects for

¹² Ibid

¹³ Stein M, Rees G & Frost N (1994) *Running the risk: young people on the streets of Britain today*. London: The Children’s Society

Smeaton, E (2005) *Living on the Edge: the experiences of detached young runaways*. London: The Children’s Society.

¹⁴ Rees, G., Franks, M., Raws, P. and Medforth, R (2005) *Responding to Young Runaways: An evaluation of 19 projects 2003 -2004*. London: DfES

¹⁵ Smeaton, E (2005) *Living on the Edge: the experiences of detached young runaways*. The Children’s Society

young people running away¹⁶ analysed in some detail the profile of young people referred to services, the initial and ongoing contact rates, and the degree to which projects were able to effect change. The findings from this, together with other messages from research, suggest that referral and access routes along with different methods of engagement will impact upon the achievement of positive change amongst different groups within the cohort:

- Some young people are less likely to be reported as missing than others and these include the older age group, young people living at home who have developed patterns of repeat running, young people who have been forced to leave or young people that are involved in or witness to abusive situations. For these groups therefore, there is a need for a well developed preventative sector safety net and systems to facilitate early identification. Alternative referral routes will need to be developed including a strong direct access route.
- For 'looked after' children the most likely referral route is through residential staff and carers reporting young people as missing to the police. The tendency to over-report (i.e. to 'misper' young people who have not run away but have failed to come in by the agreed time) can have the effect of obscuring the support needs of young people who genuinely run away. There is a tendency to label young people as 'runaways' or absconders' and this can also act as a barrier to the identification of risk.
- Young people who are detached will not be referred to services by traditional routes and alternative access needs to be developed. This may be through youth homeless projects and drop in centres or through active street or outreach work¹⁷.
- Different methods of engagement are required to meet the full range of need and address different types of risk. Interventions should therefore be based upon thorough needs assessment.

3.5 Young people's views

3.5.1 Research undertaken with young people to explore their views and experiences of running away reinforces these differential needs for support. Noticeable differences emerge between those running away from home and from care, and those young people who have become detached from their families and from services altogether.

3.5.2 Young people living in care feel that they are more likely to run away because, in addition to the problems that led to them being in care, they have to cope with the difficulties of living in the 'care' environment. These could include feeling bullied by other residents, feeling controlled by too many rules and restrictions on their activities, feeling ignored or unfairly treated. Young people also identify difficulties in being separated from family and friends or lack of choice of placement leading to 'not wanting to be there' or 'wanting to be somewhere else.'¹⁸

3.5.3 A common theme to arise among young people living in residential care is the practice of reporting young people missing who have stayed out without permission which they can see as unfair and discriminatory. Some young people say that this can also be counter-productive because being 'wanted' by the police makes them feel more like running, either because it provides an adrenalin kick or because they feel guilty and find it hard to return to the placement.¹⁹

¹⁶ Rees, G., Franks, M., Raws, P. and Medforth, R (2005) Responding to Young Runaways: An evaluation of 19 projects 2003 -2004. London: DfES

¹⁷ Stein M, Rees G & Frost N (1994) *Running the risk: young people on the streets of Britain today*. London: The Children's Society
SEU (2002) *Young Runaways Report*

¹⁸ Morgan R (2006) *Running Away: A children's views report*. Children's Rights Director for England. CSCI

¹⁹ Ibid.

3.5.4. There are some noticeable differences in the types of support that young people say they need depending on their situation. Young people living at home identify help lines such as Childline as a good source of support because they are easy to access, confidential and the young person can exercise control over when to access and when to cease contact with the service. Young people living in care however would prefer face to face contact, possibly because they are used to this form of support and often have to meet with professionals and service providers. For these young people helplines can seem impersonal and they would rather talk to someone known to them.²⁰

3.5.5 Young people who are detached may view home as being as risky an environment or riskier than being on the streets. These young people may identify the need for mediation and the help of professionals in intervening between themselves and their parents and more help for their parents to deal with their own issues and difficulties.²¹

3.5.6 There are also however some common themes:

- The risks of running away are perceived similarly and include those of being attacked or raped, being drawn into sexual exploitation or involvement in criminal activity as survival strategies, or becoming homeless.
- Many young people do not think about the risks when they run away and it is not usually planned.
- A safe place to sleep is considered a priority and detached young people identify the need for hostel type accommodation specifically for under 16's where they can have their own space and further support if requested.
- Running away can be a positive activity and provide young people with some thinking time and space or just some fun away from the control or disapproval of adults.
- Regardless of the situation young people emphasise the need for a listening, non judgemental, trustworthy adult to tell their problems to in confidence.

4. The policy context

This section describes the current policy framework for children's services and locates young people who run away in relation to the inclusion agenda.

4.1 Every Child Matters and Change for Children

4.1.1 In 2003 the Government published a new national framework for a comprehensive and cross-cutting programme of change in services for children and young people up to the age of 19. This sets a shared agenda for the achievement of five key outcomes for children: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being. Although

²⁰ Turner, C and Jagusz J (2002) Feedback from young people on the SEU recommendations for young runaways. Barnardo's 2002

²¹ Smeaton, E (2005) Living on the Edge: the experiences of detached young runaways. Children's Society.

the needs of young people who run away relate very immediately to the *staying safe* outcome there are also strong links with all the other outcome areas.

4.2 Integrated services

- 4.2.1 The Children Act 2004 provides the legislative backbone for this reform by introducing a range of new duties on local authorities to promote multi-agency co-operation in the provision of services, the pooling of budgets and resources and the sharing of information in order to safeguard and promote children's well-being and improve outcomes for all children and young people (Section 10). The vehicles for this process are the Children's Trusts which integrate key services for children and young people, to meet their identified needs.
- 4.2.2 There is a new statutory duty for each local area to produce a single, strategic Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) which, building on an assessment of need, identifies where outcomes for children and young people need to be improved and sets out how this will be achieved. Local children's trusts bring key services together to support the work undertaken every day with children and families, underpinned by the duty to cooperate in Section 10 of the Children Act 2004. Specialist services for children and young people are integrated and accessed through more universal services. Staff working in multi-disciplinary teams may often be co-located in children's centres or schools.

4.3 Information sharing and assessment

- 4.3.1 Children's trusts are supported by integrated processes like the Common Assessment Framework or by locally developed strategies to cover area priority needs, needs assessments and resource identification and allocation.
- 4.3.2 The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) introduces a standard approach to assessing a child's additional needs and is central to the delivery of integrated frontline services. It is designed to assist with earlier identification, particularly in universal services and is therefore key to targeting more effective and joined up support at young people who are at risk through running away.
- 4.3.3 The Every Child Matters change agenda and the Children Act 2004 set clear expectations around information sharing and exchange as vital requirements in the identification of risk and early intervention. Children's trusts are intended as vehicles to overcome poor communication and should smooth these processes as information sharing indexes and databases are developed under section 12 of the Children Act 2004.
- 4.3.4 Along with the need for good information sharing is that of effective management of data. The numbers of young people running away in the local area should be monitored in order to plan services effectively and estimate the future requirements for additional support services. Effective monitoring and evaluation is required to ensure the quality of services provided and that positive outcomes for children at risk through running away are being achieved.

4.4 The Children's National Service Framework

- 4.4.1 The Children's National Service Framework (2004) sets out 11 standards for the modernisation and improvement of services to children spanning health, social services and education over a 10 year period. Of these, standard 5 is particularly relevant to the support provided to young people at risk through running away:

Standard 5: Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children and Young People

All agencies work to prevent children suffering harm and to promote their welfare, provide them with the services they require to address their identified needs and safeguard children who are being or who are likely to be harmed.

The Children's National Services Framework identifies

'...the collective responsibility of Strategic Health Authorities, Primary Care Trusts, NHS Trusts and Local Authorities and the governing bodies of both schools and further education institutions to...identify those children who are at risk of being harmed, or who are already being harmed; act to protect children from being harmed or from suffering further harm; provide services for children and their families where abuse or neglect has taken place or where action is required to prevent harm.
(Core Standards 4.2)

4.4.2 It draws particular attention to *children in special circumstances* that 'require a high degree of co-operation between staff in different agencies but who are also at most risk of achieving poorer outcomes than their peers. These children tend to be "lost" between agencies and are therefore often not in receipt of even those services that are provided universally.' Included within this group are:

Children whose families have experienced homelessness and who are living in temporary accommodation, and children who have run away from home or care.'

4.5 Children and young people – the inclusion agenda

4.5.1 A statement issued in June 2006 announcing the focus of the new Social Exclusion Taskforce Cabinet Committee reinforces the government's commitment to tackle deep seated social exclusion. The next steps identified include:

- improving the early identification of the most at-risk households, individuals and children so that interventions can be targeted more effectively at those most at risk - to themselves or to others
- raising the outcomes and aspirations of children in care
- supporting ongoing work by the Respect Unit, with improved programmes to help prevent the problem families of tomorrow.²²

4.5.2 Work is already underway that should impact on the way that young people who run away access services and support. This falls within the Youth Matters programme, which aims to re-shape and integrate services for young people in order to improve outcomes, particularly for those who are disadvantaged or at risk of social exclusion. It will do this by providing new opportunities, challenges and support to young people.

4.5.3 The Social Exclusion Unit report, *Transitions: Young Adults with Complex Needs*, addresses the issues affecting vulnerable 16-25 year olds with complex needs as they make the transition to adulthood, setting out 27 key action points that have been agreed across government.

4.6 Key policy and practice

4.6.1 In 1997 a review of the safeguards for children living away from home²³ highlighted concerns about young people who run away and, in response, the Government commissioned further research,

²² http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/newsroom/news_releases/2006/060613_se.asp

²³ Utting (1997) *People like Us - Review of the safeguards of children living away from home*,

eventually resulting in the Social Exclusion Report *Young Runaways*, accompanied by good practice guidance: *Children missing from care and home*. The SEU report proposes a *Vision for Runaway's Services* in which:

- young people at risk of running are identified and given access to the right services
- Young people who run away have someone to talk to and a safe place to go, and
- Young people and their families get access to follow-up help and support after running away.

To this end it makes recommendations in six key areas:

- putting someone in charge;
- preventing running away;
- ensuring the immediate safety of runaways who return home;
- improving the transition to independence for 16-17 year-olds who cannot go home; and
- making change happen. (p70)

The specific action points are detailed in Sections 6 and 7 of the document.

4.6.2 The *Young Runaways* report also announced that government funding would be given in order to develop and test services and approaches to more effective support. Since 2002, two government funding programmes have developed a range of pilot interventions across the UK. For more details see Section 5: Service models and practice approaches.

4.6.3 A private members bill proposed by Helen Southworth MP is shortly to receive its second reading. The 'Young Runaways' Bill calls for a national system for safeguarding young people who go missing and advocates better recording and collecting of information regarding the incidence of running away. Based upon research undertaken by the Children's Society it also proposes the development of more refuge provision across the UK.

5. Service models and practice approaches

This section explores specialist services for young people who run away by drawing on national evaluative information as well as findings from this research. It looks at the role of community refuge services evidenced by current pilot models and by focussing on the specific provision of the London Refuge.

5.1 The role of specialist services

5.1.1 The 1980's saw the development of the first specialist projects providing services to young people who run away. The provision of refuges to provide emergency accommodation support to young people who have run away was introduced in 1991 as part of the Children Act 1989 (section 51). This allowed specialist projects to apply for a licence to provide accommodation to young people without parental permission for a period of up to 14 days.

5.1.2 Two recent Government initiatives have seen the development of a range of services for young people running away across the UK in order to test different service models and approaches. The first wave of development was funded by the CYPU and established 20 projects between 2003 and 2004 intended to target those most at risk. The learning from these, derived through a national evaluation,²⁴ has informed this strategy.

²⁴ Rees, G., Franks, M., Raws, P. and Medforth, R (2005) *Responding to Young Runaways: An evaluation of 19 projects 2003 -2004*. London: DFES

5.1.3 Provision of specialist services is still thought to be patchy but services cover a broad range of activities as follows:

- Emergency accommodation
- Out of hours response
- Independent return interviews
- Family work
- Individual case work
- Informal advocacy
- Group work
- Outreach and/or street work
- Drop ins
- Signposting / onward referral
- Preventative work

Work is currently being undertaken by ACPO and PACT²⁵ to map the number and type of specialist services that are currently in existence across the country.

5.1.4 The advantages of specialist provision

- Because specialist projects are targeted at specific populations of young people they are often well placed to pick up on risk indicators, making some young people who are at risk, more visible to the statutory services.
- The concentration of resources and focus on a specific issue often enables specialist projects to provide a response. This is particularly important because early intervention can prevent patterns of behaviour developing or becoming ingrained and there is evidence to suggest that the more rapid the response, the more positive the longer term outcome.
- Specialist projects do not have to be resource intensive. Many of the national pilots were staffed by one worker only and required minimal funding.
- The tight focus of the specialist role can result in the development of particular expertise in identifying and meeting the needs of young people running away and this, in itself, can engender a high level of trust in the service on the behalf of other agencies. This benefits joint working and other inter-agency approaches, especially with the police (see Section 8).
- A specialist role can be located in the statutory or voluntary sectors providing the service is perceived by young people to be neutral and independent. The service's strength should lie in the level of engagement and quality of relationship it achieves with young people.

Gateways or gatekeepers?

5.1.5 The services that have been developed as part of the government pilot programmes offer short term interventions, in the main. Bearing in mind that we have identified running away as a potential indicator of deep seated, significant or persistent difficulties, they are not necessarily resourced to undertake the long term and intensive casework required to meet these needs. It is therefore essential that they are able to refer on to services that can fulfil that role. In this way, specialist providers can operate effectively as gateways as well as gatekeepers to children's services.

5.1.6 A related point is that specialist services have been reported by informants to this research to be highly effective where there exists a high level of trust, acceptance and respect for the expert nature

²⁵PACT (Newiss, G): forthcoming.

of the role from other agencies, especially from statutory sector colleagues. This is especially important where specialist projects are identifying early indicators of risk and in particular with regard to child protection and is entirely commensurate with the ethos of the Common Assessment Framework and accompanying information sharing arrangements.

- 5.1.7 The importance of effective inter-agency co-operation cannot be overstated as specialist services are not able to survive in a vacuum. They are at their most effective within the context of the development of a strong preventative sector which, in itself, requires a collective drive accompanied by significant investment.

The disadvantages of specialist provision

- 5.1.8 There are potential drawbacks to the specialist model of providing support to young people at risk through running away, not the least of which is funding. Pilot projects developed with government funds, for example, can have difficulties with sustainability in the longer term. One explanation for this is that young people running away are not generally a high priority for local authorities: many will not meet the eligibility criteria as young people in need and many will not come to the notice of statutory services at all (see section 7.2). It can also be argued that the existence of specialist projects may inadvertently result in statutory services being less likely to develop the data management and recording systems necessary to enable them to become more capable of identifying vulnerable young people.

5.2 The national pilot community refuge projects

- 5.2.1 In 2004 – 2006, funding was dedicated from Choice Protects for the specific development of community based refuge provision to provide a crisis intervention and immediate safety through emergency accommodation and/or direct support in response to running away incidents. A total of six projects benefited from this funding. Evaluations of these services have been undertaken but have yet to be publicly reported on.
- 5.2.2 The overview provided in this section does not intend to pre-empt any learning which may be gained from these evaluations. The information discussed here was gathered through interviews with the service managers and an examination of the internal evaluation reports or other data that were available. A description in tabular form of the service models trialled through these projects is presented in the appendix as a supplement to the brief synopses below. The London Refuge, although one of the projects supported through the Choice Protects funding is treated separately because of its unique position as a pan London resource.
- 5.2.3 Three of the five projects used the funding to build upon existing provision, the remaining two being new initiatives. They demonstrate a mix of providers and partner arrangements. The Durham Runaways Service is located within statutory social services and builds upon the existing emergency response service. The remaining projects are provided by the voluntary sector, either jointly funded or contracted by the local authority. Some of the projects experienced delays in funding or set up arrangements and had consequently little time to fully develop the new services before funding ceased.
- 5.2.4 All the projects saw themselves as having a preventative role running alongside the emergency intervention. This ranged from the provision of out of hours helpline to very proactive work in schools and community venues to raise awareness around the risks of running away. One of the projects provided longer term interventions in the form of family support and casework as necessary.
- 5.2.5 Three of the projects were developed to provide emergency refuge, although none have actually applied for refuge status under Section 51. The Liverpool Runaways Project had originally intended to provide access to 10 designated local authority beds but this never transpired. In Leicester,

monitoring of the data for young people using the project has not revealed the need for emergency accommodation and there has only been one request for support of this type over the year.

- 5.2.6 The Torbay South Coast Runaways Initiative (SCRI) offers flexible refuge accommodation under Section 17 or 20 (when exceeding 24 hours). The Durham Runaways Project provides emergency accommodation under Section 17 and the Bradford Community Refuge Project provides access to emergency foster carers and day care under section 20.
- 5.2.7 The additional benefits of having approved refuge status are in providing immediate safety for young people without acquiring the responsibilities of corporate parent towards those who would not normally meet the threshold criteria as children in need. This is useful in allowing time for other supports to be put in place to enable, for example, a return home. It also creates the opportunity to provide support to those who need emergency accommodation but would be unwilling to be looked after by children and young people's services.
- 5.2.8 The benefits of flexible refuge models over fixed 'refuges' are generally perceived to be in providing access to a bed when needed without the significant resources required for a fixed unit. Flexible arrangements are likely to build upon existing emergency resources such as foster care or, as in the case of the Torbay project, may provide a fixed physical resource staffed on an emergency basis by sessional workers. Although cost effective, this can present challenges in terms of recruitment, training and retention, particularly if the resource is not used regularly. There is also a risk that sessional workers may not be available when the need does arise so contingency arrangements do need to be in place, such as the use of agency staff.
- 5.2.9 The pilot services that had developed a preventative role were able to market and promote the support they offered at the same time. This was particularly the case for those that went into schools or venues in the community, although such methods cannot be guaranteed to reach the most marginalised young people. This is of some significance given the acknowledged links between school absence and running away.
- 5.2.10 Referral routes will obviously determine the populations of young people that a project succeeds in supporting and therefore require careful consideration when trying to target young people most 'at risk.' Projects in receipt of missing person's reports from the police generally show higher numbers of referrals but this route is not guaranteed to distinguish those most 'in need' from 'low risk' referrals where no extra intervention is required. This returns us to the issue of how risk is established, and by whom, and raises a question as to whether special arrangements might enable the use of referral routes to more effectively filter and prioritise need.
- 5.2.11 Another important point for those services relying on police referrals is the inability to access those who are not reported as missing and, given that this group is likely to include young people in situations where there are child protection concerns, and young people who are forced to leave, this also represents a significant barrier in reaching young people 'at risk'.
- 5.2.12 Geographical and service location can also impact on the make up of the service user group. The Durham project's location within the statutory services, for example, has resulted in a majority of referrals being of young people already 'looked after' rather than running from home, despite the fact that the project was intended for both populations. Thus the project role has developed accordingly, with a high level of support being provided to prevent repeat running from care.
- 5.2.13 In Torbay, the location of the project within a more generic drop-in centre for young people seems to have facilitated access for a wider population and this has resulted in some success in reaching young people not reported as missing. This may be partly attributable to the fact that young people who do not conceive of themselves as having 'run away' or in need of a specialist service, feel more comfortable using a service with general access.

- 5.2.14 Projects relying on direct access need to invest a large amount of time and financial resources into promoting the service and may still only succeed in receiving few referrals. The national evaluation of 19 projects notes a disappointing rate of self referral²⁶, although this may be an important referral route for particular groups of young people 'at risk' such as young people forced to leave. A strong direct access route requires a good information supply about services and well developed preventative work. This is a role for schools, youth services, Connexions etc. Services using self referral routes need to develop very strong relationships with other agencies in order to promote the service, rather than rely solely on independent marketing.
- 5.2.15 A number of alternative referral routes may be the most effective way to target those most at risk, although careful consideration needs to be given to the identification and initial assessment process in order that resources are not misdirected.

5.3 The London Refuge

- 5.3.1 The London Refuge is the largest of its kind in the UK, providing six emergency beds for young people at risk through running away. It is a pan London resource and will admit young people who are in need of immediate safety within the Greater London boundary. In addition to refuge it also provides a range of services including family work and support with education.
- 5.3.2 Although local authorities can refer young people directly to the Refuge they tend not to do so. Despite this a high percentage of the young people admitted are known to children and young people's services (see appendix one). The largest proportion of admissions is due to direct access referrals from young people themselves or from help lines such as Childline. It tends to see young people who have run away from home rather than care. One explanation for this, offered by staff, is that young people in care may experience more 'pull' factors (i.e. when they run away from care they are more likely to have a particular destination in mind), whereas young people leaving home are more likely to leave because they are 'pushed' or feel that they have no choice. The former group may therefore have less need for a bed for the night and immediate safety than the latter.
- 5.3.3 The Refuge is currently funded as one of the government pilots. Its funding history however has been difficult and has led to a reduction in service over the last three years from ten beds to six. Despite being a pan London resource, its central location inevitably means that the Refuge has a higher intake of young people from the inner London boroughs. A proportion of these may be transient, making it difficult for the Refuge to identify the financial responsibility of a specific borough.
- 5.3.4 It is often the case that local authorities are reluctant to commit financial resources to individual young people that are not automatically their financial responsibility because they may not necessarily meet the threshold for children and young people's services. They may be equally reluctant to commit to a service that young people from their borough may not consistently use.
- 5.3.5 The example of the London Refuge, whilst providing a high quality and valued support service to young people, is illustrative of some of the difficulties specialist projects can have in sustaining sufficient levels of funding, particularly if not 'owned' by one individual local authority.

²⁶ Rees, G., Franks, M., Raws, P. and Medforth, R (2005) *Responding to Young Runaways: An evaluation of 19 projects 2003 -2004*. London: DFES

Section Two: The London Context

6. Preventing running away

6.1 The incidence of young people 'missing' in London

6.1.1 Statistical data (see appendix 4) provided by the Metropolitan Police for the financial year 2005-6 provides information on 16,137 missing incidents for young people under the age of 18 across the 32 London boroughs. Of these:

- Just over one half were female
- One quarter were under the age of 14 years
- Less than 1% (n= 127) remain unsolved at the point of enquiry.

6.1.2 National estimates²⁷ of the incidence of running away suggest that girls are slightly more likely to run away than boys and the police data is consistent with this finding. Recent research²⁸ found that 30% of young people running away overnight had first done so before the age of 13. The Metropolitan figures appear to confirm a relatively high incidence of running away for younger children. Initial findings from the same research also show a lower incidence of running away in London compared to other areas. Further analysis is expected to be published by the Children's Society addressing this issue.

6.2 Taking the Lead

Police

6.2.1 The Department of Health recommended in 2002²⁹ that there should be:

A clear local police lead to be responsible for young missing persons...to better link police into local services for runaways, develop specialist skills and knowledge about running away and to give a more consistent and efficient response to runaways.

6.2.2 This has been achieved through the location of Missing Person's Units in each of the Borough Commands and the identification of staff to lead on missing incidents concerning children and young people.

6.2.3 The work of the Missing Person's Units is overseen and monitored by Operation Compass which is part of Territorial Policing and the Violent Crime Directorate. Compass provides direct support unit for frontline borough-based colleagues across London by offering advice on live missing investigations and sharing best practice across the boroughs. It has also modernised the Standard Operating Procedures³⁰ for the investigation of missing persons in line with the guidance from ACPO (Association of Chief Police Officers).

6.2.4 Operation Compass is independent of the Specialist Crime Directorate which has the child protection portfolio but the two units complement one another and are linked through policy, practice and referral, ensuring close liaison.

²⁷ Safe on the Streets Research Team (1999) *Still Running: Children on the Streets in the UK*. The Children's Society

Smeaton E and Rees G (2004) *Running away in South Yorkshire*. The Children's Society

²⁸ Rees, G and Lee, J (2005) *Still Running 11: Findings from the Second National Survey of Young Runaways*. The Children's Society

²⁹ Department of Health (2002) *Young Runaways*. Social Exclusion Unit.

³⁰ Standard Operating Procedure: Investigation of Missing Persons and Unidentified Persons 2005

Children and young people's services

6.2.5 Department of Health guidance recommends the appointment of

... a senior designated manager with responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of its missing from care protocols and procedures, reporting information about patterns of absence amongst looked after children to the Director of Social Services and to councillors responsible for "corporate parenting". This report should be an action plan with targets for minimising missing from care incidents.³¹

Also,

... a named manager within social service departments whose responsibility would be to monitor policies and performance relating to children missing from home. Depending on the structure of the local authority this function may be carried out by the same manager responsible for the authority's missing from care strategy.³²

6.2.6 In three of the five case study boroughs a senior officer had been identified to lead with regard to co-ordinating information and monitoring services for young people running away from care. Responsibilities to young people missing from home were also described in two of the *missing* protocols. Although procedures specified that reviews of services to children missing from care or home should be undertaken on an annual basis it was not always clear with whom that responsibility belonged. Islington was able to produce evidence of monthly monitoring reports in respect of young people missing from care including an annual review prepared for the Corporate Parenting Group (see good practice example below).

Good practice example – Camden

In Camden we identified a model with clear lines of responsibility for meeting the needs of young people at risk through running away, both from home and care. The officer with the strategic lead for this work is in the child protection service and oversees specialist services contracted from the voluntary sector for young people who run away and young people who are sexually exploited. The strength of this model lies in its effectiveness at identifying risk and children 'in need', providing early intervention and developing strong links and lines of communication between agencies.

Recommendation - See section 9 - A Strategic Overview

As recommended in the Department of Health good practice guidance, a senior designated lead should be identified within each local authority, with responsibility for data collection with regard to missing episodes and the planning and monitoring of services to young people that run away from care and from home. This officer will act as the key contact within local partnerships and report regularly to the local Corporate Parenting Board in respect of missing incidents from care. The role of senior designated lead should be included in LCSB guidance.

6.3 Data Management

6.3.1 LAC 17 (2002) states the necessity for all local authorities and police forces to:

- *Audit the need for, and availability of, services for children and young people in their area who are at risk of going missing from home and care.*
- *To collect and share information relating to all incidents of young people going missing from home and locally authority care in order to develop a co-ordinated response between partner agencies*

³¹ Department of Health (2002) *Children Missing from Care and from Home: a guide to good practice*. p12

³² *Ibid.* p28

Police data

6.3.2 It is difficult to establish the true incidence of young people going missing (see 6.1). One reason is that incidents are under reported to the police particularly where a young person has been forced to leave. On the other hand, over-counting occurs because missing incidents are recorded rather than the number of children they relate to. For example, two or three children who are running away repeatedly could significantly impact on the number of missing incidents recorded in any one borough. Also, there may be variation in the way that forces or even local units respond to or record incidents and there is currently no requirement for figures to be systematically recorded or reported on an annual basis.³³ The Metropolitan Police Service is seeking to improve recording systems and is introducing new search facilities in order to be able to produce a variety of statistical data.

Good practice example - Merton

In 2003 Merton Partnership Against Crime undertook an analysis of data relating to young people under the age of 18 reported missing. This found that there were 335 missing incidents regarding young people, representing 60% of all missing incidents for that year. 55% of these cases were repeat episodes and 58% of all incidents involved children in care. As a result of issues highlighted through this work a multi-agency steering group initiated the development of a specialist project, *Jigsaw 4U*, to provide support and mediation services to young people who run away.³⁴

Children and young people's services data

6.3.3 Government guidance requires that children and young people's services should record missing incidents from care in order to monitor patterns of running away:

- *Service managers must monitor patterns of absence from individual children's homes and foster carers*
- *Reports about patterns of absence must be made available to senior managers and to the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) Inspectorate.*³⁵

6.3.4 Although there is no requirement to monitor local patterns of young people going missing from home, the guidance does state that:

- *Children and young people who go missing from home may be "children in need" and when appropriate they should have access to an initial assessment provided by the local authority*³⁶

6.3.5 We requested information from children and young people's services in the case study boroughs about the number of missing incidents recorded for the month of February 2006 in respect of:

- a) children or young people recorded as absent from care
- b) young people coming to their attention because of running away from home (these might be through police notifications, referrals from partner agencies, incidents responded to by the Emergency Duty Team etc)

³³ PACT Research Team (2005) *Every Five Minutes: A Review of the Available Data on Missing Children in the UK*. PACT.

³⁴ Merton was not, however, one of the boroughs in the case study.

³⁵ Department of Health (2002) *Children Missing from Care and from Home: a guide to good practice*.p7

³⁶ Ibid. p28

6.3.6 In the event data was produced by three out of the five boroughs.

Missing incidents recorded by children and young people's services in 5 London Boroughs – February 2006				
London Borough	Missing from care	Missing from home	No of incidents	No. of independent return interviews undertaken
Redbridge	3 children	No data	4	No data
Islington	12 children	No data	54	No data
Westminster	14 children	No data	61	No data
Camden	No data	See Camden Miss U project below.		
Lambeth	No data	No data	No data	No data

6.3.7 Islington was able to provide us with the most comprehensive information in relation to young people missing from care due to its monthly monitoring procedures. In February 2006, a total 44 incidents were of less than 12 hours duration including 2 incidents of late return and one overnight incident. 34 of these incidents were reported to the police. There were 8 incidents of between 12 and 24 hours duration including 4 overnight. All of these were reported to the police. There was one incident of 6 days and one of more than 4 weeks, again both reported to the police. Islington figures for April 2004 to February 2005 show that of 841 missing incidents, 639 (76%) were from 6 residential units and related to 20 children.³⁷

6.3.8 In Westminster, 5 of the 14 young people who were absent in February were only involved in one missing incident and therefore 56 missing incidents are attributable to 9 young people. All absences were reported to the police. 11 of the young people were female and 3 male. The ages of the young people ranged from 12 to 16. Of the 14 young people, 11 were aged 14 or 15.

6.3.9 The Camden Miss U project was able to produce quarterly data with respect to referrals to the service. The service receives referrals primarily from the police Missing Person's Unit. Although the service only works with girls and young women it does record incidents of missing for young men also for monitoring purposes. The service recorded a total of 166 missing incidents for the year 2005-6, representing a monthly average of 14 young people. Unfortunately it is not possible to disaggregate the data in respect of children missing from home and care.

6.3.10 There are a number of issues around the management of data with regard to missing incidents:

- It is a matter of concern that so little data was available concerning the incidence of young people going missing from care.
- Where there is data available it is often not possible to disaggregate incidents where young people have failed to return on time from those where young people have run away. This frustrates the task of monitoring patterns of missing from care episodes and obscures levels of risk (see 6.4.2 below).
- Although missing incidents may be registered in individual case files there are no mechanisms for social workers to systematically report missing incidents for young people looked after in foster care or living out of borough, so that data may be collated and analysed. Only one borough provided evidence to suggest this was being addressed (see good practice example: Islington, below).
- We were not provided with any data for the incidence of young people coming to the attention of children and young people's services because of running away from home. This data is dependent on the way that frontline services record and monitor referrals and

³⁷ Figures include young people looked after within the borough and placed out of borough.

outcomes and without very clear recording systems with specific categories for missing incidents this information proves too difficult to extract.

6.3.11 It seems likely that in most local authorities, robust monitoring systems have yet to be developed in order to identify the incidence of young people going missing from foster care and residential care. In order to provide sufficient information as a basis for service planning the data needs to include:

- Duration of time away
- Whether the incident was risk assessed and the outcome of that assessment
- Whether the incident was reported to the police
- Action on return i.e. whether a young person was offered / received an independent return interview
- Any 'risk' issues arising from their time away
- Details of follow up support offered.

A tool to collect monitoring data has been included in the appendices to the LSCB *Procedure for Safeguarding Children Missing from Care and Home* (see 6.4.5 below).

6.3.12 Similar monitoring processes to capture information with regards to young people running away from home should be developed to record the incidence of referrals taken by frontline services (including the Emergency Duty Team) from the police or other partner agencies with regard to missing incidents and action taken. This would help to identify service responses to young people who run away and establish whether high threshold criteria is excluding young people at risk from a service.

6.3.13 We identified work in Islington that addresses some of the issues in relation to recording incidents of missing from care:

Good practice example – Islington

Islington has been developing a structured reporting system to support its Missing from Care protocol. A *Missing from Care* form has been devised to be returned by the young person's social worker and this provides detail about each missing incident and space for the young person's reasons for going missing. Data is collected from residential units, foster care placements and out of borough placements. The monitoring data is then reported to the Corporate Parenting Group in order to inform future service planning.

6.4 Identifying young people at risk

6.4.1 Young people missing from care are identified as an 'at risk' group because:

- They are more likely to run away than young people living at home
- A culture of running away in residential units can contribute to patterns of repeated running away
- Young people in care are more vulnerable to targeting by 'risky' adults and to sexual exploitation

6.4.2 Many children's homes currently report young people as 'missing' when they do not return to their placement on time or when they stay away without permission (unauthorised absence). Very often staff will know where a young person is and the young person will not be at any particular risk. This practice raises concerns for the following reasons:

- It can obscure risk or make it more difficult to differentiate young people who are at risk from those who are not

- It overloads the police with missing reports that are time intensive and divert resources unnecessarily
- It provides misleading data in terms of monitoring patterns of running away from care and this data cannot therefore be used to inform future service planning.

6.4.3 This issue has been addressed through the *Missing from Care and from Home* guidance which distinguishes between ‘missing’ and ‘absent without permission’ incidents and recommends that:

- A risk assessment should be undertaken when a young person is placed to identify the likelihood that they might go missing
- A second risk assessment should be undertaken in the event of a young person going missing
- Categories of unauthorised absence should define whether a young person is at risk and subsequently reported as missing to the police.
- Where unauthorised absence exceeds a particular time an incident should be re-classified as ‘missing’ and reported to the police.

6.4.4 The guidance recommends that categories of risk be agreed between agencies in order to clarify “the roles of social services, the police and voluntary agencies in responding to missing person’s incidents.”³⁸

6.4.5 The London Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is shortly to issue guidance in the form of the *London Procedure for Safeguarding Children Missing from Care and Home*³⁹ which clearly excludes unauthorised absences from the procedure in a rigorous approach to risk assessment.

“The police have worked hard on the protocol. Children’s homes now need to do the preparatory work when a young person comes into placement – undertake a risk assessment around the likelihood of running for individual children and prepare [information packs]for the file”
Police Inspector, Operation Compass

6.4.6 The *Missing from Care* protocols and procedures from three of the case study boroughs all supported this approach. However, we found that some children’s homes still adhere to the practice of reporting as missing, young people who return late. In some cases staff will have legitimate concerns about a young person’s safety because they believe them to be in a risky situations or location. If there is an agreed understanding, between the local police and the residential unit, of the basis on which young people are reported then these incidents are treated seriously and responded to accordingly.

6.4.7 However some units will report young people missing as a matter of procedure without any assessment of risk. Young people often maintain telephone contact with the home in such circumstances and clearly intend to return in their own time. Young people themselves have commented on the detrimental effect that this practice can have on their relationships with residential staff and some also suggest that the status of being ‘wanted’ by the police can encourage them to stay away or ‘on the run’ longer than they might otherwise have done (see section 3: young people’s views).

6.4.8 This underlines the importance of training to accompany the introduction of *missing* protocols to residential staff and carers in order to ensure that procedures for assessing risk upon placement, and in the event of a child going missing, are properly followed. Joint training events between borough police, the local Missing Person’s Unit, residential staff and managers may help in clarifying the agreed responsibilities with regard to the reporting of missing incidents.

6.4.9 Although some policies refer to the opportunity for young people to talk to an independent person on their return from a missing incident there was little evidence that these were being offered

³⁸ Department of Health (2002) *Children Missing from Care and from Home: a guide to good practice*. p14

³⁹ Henceforth referred to as the LSCB Missing Procedure

systematically. The exception to this was in Camden where a specialist project worker follows up on all missing incidents from a local children's home (see good practice example below)

Links between running away and sexual exploitation

6.4.10 Police and local authority informants to the research believed that young people in care were particularly at risk of sexual exploitation. There was a general perception that young people already involved in sexual exploitation and placed in children's homes can have the effect of involving others. There is definite and deliberate targeting of children's homes because of the young people's vulnerability to exploitation.

"These young people are very vulnerable to targeting and in some cases staff have had serious concerns. It is important to be really on the ball and take action very quickly in these situations as they can escalate very quickly, especially with regular new admissions to the unit who can get pulled in too."

Residential unit manager

Good practice example – Camden Miss U and No 66 St Christopher's Children's Home

Miss U is a specialist Barnardo's project supporting young women who run away and has close links with sexual exploitation projects for both young men and young women in the borough.

The Miss U worker and the No.66 residential home have worked together to develop a 'whole culture' approach where going missing is seen as a basic risk of residential care that has to be specifically addressed and an 'anti-running' culture established.

The Miss U worker assesses the group needs of each new intake of young people and designs a bespoke programme addressing the risks of running away and personal safety. Programmes run for six weeks at a time on a rolling basis. It is now part of the routine and expectations of the home that young people attend for each week of the programme but *"this is easy as they really look forward to it"*.

Staff awareness of sexual exploitation and the dangers of running away is high and all staff have been trained in sexual exploitation issues. This approach has been developed on the basis of real concern for young people's safety rather than the rules of the unit.

The Miss U worker receives reports of all young people going missing from the home and on their return follows up the incident with an independent return interview and support for the young person to address the issues.

Young people missing from home

6.4.11 Government guidance identifies young people missing from home as likely to be 'in need' and therefore entitled to services from the local authority or other agency acting on its behalf,

There will need to be a mutual understanding between local authorities, the police and partner organisations about the criteria uses for accepting referrals⁴⁰

6.4.12 In addition, the LSCB Missing Procedure includes specification of arrangements for young people missing from home.

6.4.13 Although the majority of young people who run away, or stay away, from home do not present any significant cause for concern, it is essential to be able to differentiate those who are at risk. Identification of the routes by which young people come to the attention of children and young people's services can aid in determining if and where young people fall through the safety net. This is particularly important in the London context where some populations may be quite transient.

⁴⁰ Department of Health (2002) *Children Missing from Care and from Home*. P24.

6.4.14 Currently, the police send a notification to children and young people's services that a child has 'come to notice' (known as a Form 78). The police will assess for particular types of risk according to their own procedures⁴¹ and each referral will have passed through CAIT⁴² before being passed on to children and young people's services.

6.4.15 Practice varies, but in authorities where there is no specialist support for young people running away, Form 78's will usually go to the front line service (often the duty and assessment team). We found that in these circumstances, notification of a missing incident is not usually a sufficient trigger for a service response. Factors that might instigate an initial assessment would be age (if it was a young child) or if the police had identified any child protection concerns. One borough told us that repeated episodes of running would be detected and elicit further action, but this level of monitoring was not something we detected consistently (see 7.2 for further discussion of service threshold criteria).

The Duty and Assessment Team receives all the police form 78's which would include young people running away from home. If there was a form for a young child they may refer it for a needs assessment. For older children they would just log it unless they were receiving repeat referrals and could detect a theme developing in which case it would be sent through as a referral for assessment.

Duty and Assessment Team manager

Independent return interviews

6.4.16 The Standard Operating Procedures⁴³ state that on a child or young person's return home a police officer should visit to confirm their identity and also establish whether the young person has suffered any harm, or been the victim or perpetrator of crime whilst absent. The police will then offer the opportunity to speak to a social worker or other support agency. There is an additional role here for agencies working with children to look into the reasons behind the running behaviour, taking the welfare of the child as a clear agenda and offering help and support to address any issues and to prevent further episodes of running away. Department of Health good practice guidance states that:

Runaways, particularly the most vulnerable, should be provided with timely and sensitive interviews after running away, to identify any longer term needs⁴⁴.

Whether or not young people who have gone missing from home are assessed as being 'in need' they should be offered access to an independent interview upon their return.⁴⁵

6.4.17 We found that in boroughs where there is no specialist service for young people running away, independent return interviews were not being routinely offered. A procedure was introduced into the East London protocol (see section 7.3 : Protocols and procedures) to ensure that independent return interviews are undertaken but has been implemented with limited success to date. In the period from June 2005 to March 2006 the 'young runaways project' which was to act as a clearing house for the interviews, received 83 referrals from four out of the ten boroughs covered by the protocol. The referrals were duly allocated to various approved agencies but insufficient information is available to ascertain how many interviews were actually undertaken.

6.4.18 We found that specialist projects for young people running away did undertake them routinely (see good practice example below) and their example shows that they can be an effective tool for picking up on risk that may not be identified through the duty and assessment system. In addition they

⁴¹ Standard Operating Procedure: Investigation of Missing Persons and Unidentified Persons 2005.

⁴² Child Abuse Investigation Team

⁴³ Standard Operating Procedure: Investigation of Missing Persons and Unidentified Persons 2005. Par 8.6

⁴⁴ Department of Health (2002) *Young Runaways Report*. Recommendation 16.

⁴⁵ Department of Health (2002) *Children Missing from Care and from Home: a guide to good practice p28 recommendation 20*

provide the young person with the opportunity to access support independently without having to go through their parent or carer, who might be implicated in the running away behaviour.

6.4.19 Independent return interviews can be offered by a range of agencies approved by children and young people's services including:

- Specialist 'running away' support services
- Children's rights services
- Education
- Family support services
- Independent visitors
- Connexions and youth services
- Youth Offending Services

"Merton police run an excellent Missing Person's service and they felt it would be a good idea to have an outside agency providing debriefs for young people returning from running away, which is why the project was set up. The service is almost like a return interview...and followed up by counselling and mediation."

Voluntary sector practitioner.

Good practice example - Camden specialist role

In Camden, the police inform young people returning from a missing incident about the Miss U project. A referral is then sent direct to the specialist worker who responds by contacting the young person by phone or letter to ask if they would like to talk to someone about why they ran away (an independent return interview). Once they have contact with a young person they will provide four or five support sessions on an individual basis exploring issues around the reasons for running away, triggers, risks and alternative strategies etc.

The service attempts to provide an independent, confidential, neutral space for young people through a short term and focussed piece of work. It will work with young people at a range of venues including school, family home, community etc. The service also provides an important role in identifying early indicators of sexual exploitation and many referrals for the Barnardo's sexual exploitation service come from Miss U. As well as providing that specific screening service, an assessment is also undertaken of the likelihood of repeat running and can be effective in ensuring early interventions before behaviour becomes entrenched.

6.5 Approaches to early intervention

6.5.1 The new arrangements being developed under the Every Child Matters programme of reform should result in a far more effective safety net being in place to identify the needs of children and families through the use of joint assessment arrangements. These needs should then be met by a spectrum of support, from universal through to more targeted and specialist services.

"Any family that does not want to draw the attention of the authorities or the police is unlikely to report a young person missing. In these cases it may only be the school that may be able to pick up on missing issues."

Service Manager

6.5.2 Running away behaviour may be accompanied by other risk indicators and the use of the Common Assessment Framework combined with the early warning systems that are being developed through multi-agency panels (such as YISP's)⁴⁶, should ensure that these needs are identified early. It is particularly important that these identification routes are developed in order to pick on those young people whose families do not report them as missing.

6.5.3 Local authorities are now in various stages of developing integrated services and joint forums aimed at providing more preventative approaches. The model outlined below has been successful in

⁴⁶ Youth Inclusion Support Panels

broadening the agenda out from preventing young people getting into trouble with the law, to ensuring early intervention with vulnerable young people and those at risk. This makes it a more appropriate model than the usual YISP for identifying the needs of young people at risk through running away.

Good practice example – Westminster Youth Inclusion Support Panel

The YISP was originally developed to ensure early intervention with children at risk of offending or anti-social behaviour but has broadened out to support young people thought to be at risk by two referring agencies or because of different indicators. The panels are multi agency and meet once a month to receive referrals, identify resources and put together integrated support plans on an individual basis. 19 agencies are represented on the panel including housing, social services, CaMHS, sports and leisure providers, drug counselling services, family support services etc. Specialists are co-opted in when required. Consent around information sharing is gained and ONSET⁴⁷ assessments undertaken with the young person central to the support planning process. Interventions last from 6 to 9 months. Lead professionals are identified and there are direct links to the NCH Family Support Service. One of the strengths of this model is that children and families engage with it voluntarily and it is very solution focussed. It is hoped that over time it will reduce the numbers of young people needing acute services.

Since 2003 it has identified 585 young people and 28 panels have been held. There are currently 62 young people on Integrated Support Packages and only 9 have progressed to the Youth Justice System.

Good practice example – Camden

The post of 'monitoring and inclusion officer for children missing from education' has been introduced in Camden. Part of the role is strategic and involves the development of inter-agency information sharing systems. More recently this has extended to children who are at risk of going missing and children who are missing.

Camden was one of the IRA pilot areas and so set about the task of developing systems to find, track and identify children who are missing from various services. To this end, the monitoring and inclusion officer works with education and social care, housing, health, Miss U and the police to identify existing systems for sharing information as well as gaps in information about young people who are either missing out on statutory services or going missing from services.

All the key agencies are working together to develop over-arching policy and guidance around the safeguarding of missing children. This will be a three pronged document bringing together the *Children missing from education* policy, the protocol for *children who go missing from home and care* and existing LCPC safeguarding guidance. This work attempts to capture the links across agencies around missing children - such as the fact that children missing from school are more likely to go missing from home etc.

⁴⁷ ONSET assessments are risk assessments covering 7 key areas that identify and score levels of need.

Recommendation

A local strategy is developed in response to a local assessment of need, to support young people who run away. This links in firmly with the inter-agency structures being formed within children's trusts to facilitate new approaches to early intervention. This strategy is used to provide a safety net for young people running away from home and should include local arrangements for emergency accommodation, independent return interviews and packages of follow up support. This work should reduce the need for longer term and more specialist children's services.

6.6 Cross borough co-operation

- 6.6.1 The importance of cross borough co-operation was highlighted as an important mechanism for developing sensitivity to risk issues for young people (see good practice example below). The convening of cross borough and multi-agency fora enable a level of information exchange and cross referencing that is otherwise not possible and which have a valuable role to play in identifying the links between risky activity and young people running away, in the development of pan London approaches to the issue.

Good practice example - North London Forum re: cross borough sexual exploitation issues

There is a north London reference group that meets regularly to share information across the boroughs of Hackney, Haringey, Camden and Islington which is chaired by a manager from a Barnardo's service. This involves representatives from YOT's, DAT's⁴⁸, the police, child protection teams and those with an interest in the common agenda. The group shares and progresses good practice and demonstrates that through the sharing of soft information, patterns and trends can be identified in order to anticipate what is happening on the street. There is a good relationship with 'Clubs and Vice'. However the effectiveness of such forums can be limited by geographical boundaries if other boroughs have not developed the same level of awareness. There are plans to set up an equivalent group in South London.

7. Responding to running away

7.1 Immediate safety and specialist support

- 7.1.1 Some children and young people who run away need safe, temporary shelter. How this can best be provided for the few young people for whom it is necessary is not entirely resolved. Six pilot projects were established and funded by the government following on from the Social Exclusion Report⁴⁹ to explore the options in practice (see section 5.2). The fostering model is one approach to providing emergency accommodation that is currently being tested (see 'Bradford' in appendix 5). Recommendation 10 of the report specifies the *better use of foster carers to provide emergency accommodation for runaways*. However, the learning from these pilots is yet to be made available.
- 7.1.2 Very few specialist resources were identified in the course of the London mapping exercise. Those that do exist are mainly homeless resources aimed at the 16+ age group (see section 8.2). The London Refuge, as a six bed residential unit with refuge status (under section 51), is currently the only provision that offers emergency accommodation to young people not meeting children's services' threshold criteria or not wishing to be looked after by the local authority.

⁴⁸ Youth Offending Teams, Drug action Teams.

⁴⁹ Social Exclusion Unit (2002) Young Runaways Report

7.1.3 Foster carers are well placed to provide a personalised and individual response to young people who have run away and the local development of clusters of approved refuge providers may be an effective way of developing and integrating local responses to the needs of young people in this situation. For further discussion of this point see section 10 below.

Recommendation: Each local authority should work towards the development of local resources in order to provide immediate safety in the form of emergency accommodation and support to young people who require it. The level of resources provided should be determined by the local assessment of need and based upon police and local authority data regarding the local incidence of running away. Flexible arrangements should be developed between boroughs to facilitate the use of each others' refuge resources where young people have travelled across local authority boundaries, to minimise the need for travel in emergency

7.2 Accessing services and threshold criteria

7.2.1 Some informants to the research expressed concern that some vulnerable young people can become invisible because they do not meet the threshold criteria for children's services. This is particularly the case for young people who are refusing to go home. We heard that in circumstances where a parent is refusing to have a young person back they may be offered accommodation but that this was not the case for young people refusing to return, because in theory they have somewhere to return to.

These young people are equally vulnerable and 'at risk' given the paucity of emergency accommodation available for young people under 16 in the community. Compelling young people to return home without support in these circumstances is likely to be counter-productive and result in repeat episodes of running. Although we found little evidence of rough sleeping we were told that young people were putting themselves in risky situations – staying with friends, care leavers or other young adults in hostels.

A recent example would be a 14 year old girl, who repeatedly runs away, refusing to go home. She hasn't been reported to the police and refuses to go home. She is staying in inappropriate accommodation. Children's services are refusing to accommodate because Mum isn't refusing to have her back. In this situation the Refuge can provide a safe space for cooling off for all parties.

Voluntary sector practitioner

7.2.2 This research identified that that this was also the case in accessing section 17 ('in need' support services) and that young people running away were likely to be considered as low priority. Very often family support services can only be accessed through the frontline 'gateway' to services and in general we identified too few preventative services available to fill the gap.

"Young people running away do not have a high profile in the borough. Services are limited so a referral for a young person running away from home will compete with a lot of complex casework issues."

Referral and Assessment Team Manager

Good practice example –Maryland's NCH Family Support Service in Westminster

The service is represented on the Westminster YISP panel (see section 6.5) and as a result young people in the community can be referred directly rather than through the children and young people's frontline services. Maryland's provides assessment and intervention including intensive outreach for young people who are experiencing a range of difficulties. The support may be to prevent them from coming into care, support them to go back home having been accommodated or help them back into education. The service tends to sit in the middle between social services, the young person and the parents and consequently develops a fuller picture of what is actually going on. They are not restricted by the local authority agenda because they are an independent service and so are able to develop positive working relationships and engage young people effectively.

7.3 Protocols and procedures

- 7.3.1 The *Children Missing from Care and from Home* practice guidance acknowledges the progress made by local authorities in developing local protocols and procedures in response to the ACPO/LGA *Missing from Care* document published in 1997. However it noted that most solely addressed the working arrangements between the police and local authority without including the contribution of other agencies such as those within the voluntary sector. The guidance therefore recommends the incorporation of wider inter-agency working arrangements and also the strengthening of links into the local safeguarding and child protection arrangements.
- 7.3.2 In 2003/4 the Safe in the City project run by the Peabody Trust and Centrepoin developed a joint protocol for responding to young people missing in the 4 London boroughs of Greenwich, Hackney, Newham and Tower Hamlets. In a second stage of development the St. Christopher's 'Young Runaways Project' was funded by the Association of London Government (ALG) and the London East Connexions Partnership (LECP) to roll the protocol out across the 10 East London boroughs. Now in its final phase the protocol has been adapted and is shortly to be incorporated into the London Safeguarding Children Board procedures as the *London Procedure for Safeguarding Children Missing from Care and Home*.
- 7.3.3. The boroughs participating in this mapping exercise were in various stages of developing new or revising existing procedures in line with the LSCB guidance.

7.4 Inter-agency co-operation

- 7.4.1 Well prepared local protocols are vital to the development of inter-agency responses to young people going missing and we found examples where clear arrangements really facilitate good information exchange and further the safeguarding agenda. These examples were largely evidenced by specialist projects that are able to devote time and resources to smoothing these inter-agency processes.
- 7.4.2 The advantages of building good relationships between consistent contacts particularly lie in facilitating the exchange of sensitive information, and this is a distinct strength of developing a specialist role. An example was provided where a successful relationship between a local Missing Person's Unit and specialist project for running away was attributed to:

"An excellent relationship has been built up with the police as a result [of the specialist project]. In this way it has really been instrumental in reframing perceptions of young people and some of the issues they are dealing with... The work is fuelled by a shared understanding of what lies at the end of the road for young people if issues are not addressed and also by the knowledge that by working together services do have the capacity to impact positively on outcomes"

Child Protection Officer

- a good working protocol to support information sharing
 - regular visits to each others premises
 - regular monthly update meetings
 - good relationships between consistent contacts that can facilitate free exchange of information over the phone.
- 7.4.3 More detailed and timely information would enable Emergency Duty Teams to support young people who run away more effectively. Young people who come in to the borough are often known to other authorities and yet it is very difficult to access that information out of hours. This means that the EDT service can not be sure that it is taking the most appropriate action in respect of an individual or the action that the originating authority would want it to take. Westminster has been developing ways to address this problem so that EDT services can access the necessary information at the appropriate time.

Good practice example – Westminster

In Westminster they have a computer system that enables social workers to leave a bespoke ‘out of hours’ report about a young person for whom there are particular concerns if they are looked after or on the child protection register, if they are perceived as being more volatile or at risk. This information is then accessible by the local EDT to access out of hours or make available to other emergency services.

7.4.4 Information sharing needs to be guided by good protocols and good practice. We found examples where this was happening and the services maintained a balance between respecting the wishes of the young person and ensuring their protection. This can be achieved with good relationships between the police, social services, specialist services and child protection.

8. Longer term intervention and support

8.1 Follow up and family support services

8.1.1 *Ensuring a consistent approach and reliable follow up support in appropriate cases will be essential in minimising the likelihood of children going missing.⁵⁰*

We found little evidence of support being available to young people and their families following a missing incident or to help prevent repeat running, except for those provided by specialist services such as the Refuge which undertakes family work, Jigsaw 4U and Camden Miss U. These tend to be relatively short interventions and some young people and families will need longer term support.

“There is little family work ... little available for those wanting help in dealing with teenage behaviour. Parents need help and guidance in dealing with run away incidents appropriately so they don’t escalate and spiral situations by locking them up for example. For the services that do exist it can be a problem to expect parents to self refer.”

Specialist service practitioner

8.1.2 It is hoped that the creation of preventative ‘safety nets’ for young people falling below the threshold for section 17 (Children Act 1989) services (see 6.5) will assist in providing more early interventions to prevent the need for more acute services.

8.2 Support to 16-17 year olds

8.2.1 The LSCB Missing Procedure covers young people up until the age of 18. Young people aged 16 to 18 can be additionally vulnerable as they are very unlikely to meet the threshold criteria for children’s services intervention. In Redbridge however joint assessment arrangements have been developed between the children and young people’s service and housing:

Good practice example – Redbridge ‘in need’ assessments for 16 – 17 year olds

Any young person who is 16 and 17 and homeless is entitled to an initial assessment which is undertaken jointly by children and young people’s services and housing. The young person is automatically assigned a social worker until that assessment process is complete and their needs identified. Children’s services have, on occasion provided accommodation as a result of an assessment but very often the young person goes straight into housing because that is what they prefer to do. This provides a clear process and identifies any additional support needs they might have. There are quarterly meetings between the two departments to discuss any issues arising.

⁵⁰ Department of Health (2002) *Children Missing from Care and from Home: a guide to good practice* p27.

8.2.2 There has been some development around ‘family mediation’ services for young people 16 and over since the inclusion of 16 and 17 year olds as a priority need group in the homeless legislation.⁵¹ However we identified that, used in this way, mediation can often be used solely as a tool for homelessness prevention rather than as a means of helping young people to resolve family issues and achieve other outcomes for young people for whom a return home is not possible or desirable.

Good practice example – Alone in London

The Alone in London service provides mediation for young people and their families (16+). ‘This is a staged process, voluntarily entered into, in which young people and their families are empowered to talk through and resolve family difficulties. It is non-directive, impartial confidential and focuses on parties’ preferred futures. An independent mediator facilitates the process, listening and helping to identify the issues and possible ways forward. In addition to facilitating effective communication, family mediation:

- enables young people to and family members to better understand themselves and how they relate to others
- enables mutual decision making
- assists both parties to find their own solutions and move forward
- supports the rebuilding of links and social networks⁵²

⁵¹ Homelessness Act 2002

⁵² Excerpt from *Mediation for young people and their families: sharing the experience of developing a service (revised 2005)*. Alone in London

Section Three: A forward strategy and recommendations

9. Local arrangements

Safeguarding

9.1.1 The Every Child Matters programme of reform identifies a collective responsibility for local authorities, education, strategic health authorities, primary care and the NHS to identify, protect and provide services to young people at risk or suffering harm. In particular, it should pay attention to those young people *in special circumstances* who can become ‘lost’ between agencies and who are at risk of achieving poorer outcomes than their peers. A high degree of co-operation between agencies is required to meet these young people’s needs.⁵³

9.1.2 Updated guidance on ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’ includes within the scope of the Local Children’s Safeguarding Board role to:

*...work to safeguard and promote the welfare of groups of children who are potentially more vulnerable than the general population, for example children living away from home, **children who have run away from home**, children in custody, or disabled children.⁵⁴*

Recommendation: A member of the Local Children’s Safeguarding Board should be identified to assume responsibility within the local authority for young people at risk through running away. This will be a strategic role to oversee the development of integral structures and services which identify and support their needs on a local level. This role should be included in LCSB guidance.

Corporate Parenting

9.1.3 The local authority has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people that it looks after. The geographical and demographic context in London raises specific issues in terms of local accommodation resources and for this reason many young people who are the responsibility of the local authority are placed out of borough with a range of providers. This makes it necessary to designate specific responsibility for the monitoring of missing incidents for children placed within and out of borough.

9.1.4 We found that Government guidance with regard to the designation of a senior officer to monitor and report missing incidents and plan services for young people running away has not been fully or universally implemented.

Co-ordinating services

9.1.5 Our findings show that a specialist role at *practitioner* level can be very successful in co-ordinating responses to young people running away because time and resources are directed towards the development of good communication and information sharing between agencies. Some facets of this co-ordinating role may include:

- Liaising and developing information sharing protocols with local Missing Person’s Units
- Receiving and monitoring referrals (MISPERS) on all children reported missing
- Receiving referrals on young people running away who are not reported as missing (from a variety of sources, see below)
- Undertaking return interviews and follow up support in the wake of missing / running away⁵⁵ incidents, or

⁵³ Children’s National Services Framework Core Standards 4.2

⁵⁴ Working Together to Safeguard Children 3.13

- Identifying and developing inter-agency working arrangements with local agencies to undertake independent return interviews and follow up support
- Collecting data re: outcomes of independent return interviews
- Ensuring that the designated lead officer receives all data regarding missing/running away incidents and independent return interview outcomes.
- Being responsible for ensuring that any child protection / sexual exploitation concerns that are identified are passed on appropriately.

Recommendation: As recommended in the Department of Health good practice guidance, a senior designated lead is identified within each local authority, with responsibility for data collection with regard to missing episodes and the planning and monitoring of services to young people that run away from care and from home. This officer will act as the key contact within local partnerships and report regularly to the local Corporate Parenting Board in respect of missing incidents from care. The role of senior designated lead should be included in LCSB guidance.

This senior officer to consider introducing an additional role at practitioner level with responsibility for co-ordinating the 'risk' assessment process and service response to young people that run away. The location of this 'Missing Children Co-ordinator' may vary between statutory or voluntary sector services according to local structures. This may be a dedicated or partial post depending on local need and circumstances.

Developing a local strategy

9.1.6 Children and young people's service plans are developed in each local authority in response to a local assessment of need which identifies where outcomes for children and young people should be improved. This local assessment should address the needs of young people who run away.

9.1.7 The development of children's trusts with integrated services and multi-agency forums are now being developed to provide more effective preventative safety nets. This is particularly the case where early intervention agendas have broadened out from anti social behaviour and offending to address the general welfare of vulnerable young people in the community. The use of the Common Assessment Framework by a range of services should identify and 'bring to notice' the needs of young people in the community who are vulnerable but unlikely otherwise to come to the notice of children and young people's services.

Recommendation: A local strategy is developed in response to a local assessment of need, to support young people who run away. This links in firmly with the inter-agency structures being formed within children's trusts to facilitate new approaches to early intervention. This strategy is used to provide a safety net for young people running away from home and should include local arrangements for emergency accommodation, independent return interviews and packages of follow up support. This work should reduce the need for longer term and more specialist children's services.

Identifying risk and assessing need

9.1.8 In order to plan for and effectively meet the needs of young people who run away it is necessary to differentiate between the majority of running away incidents that occur within a continuum of normal adolescent behaviour; and those where young people may be considered to be especially vulnerable because:

- a) They are young or have additional support needs
- b) They are running away from abusive or harmful environments and/or

⁵⁵ Here, the term 'missing' denotes a reported missing incident and the term 'running away' an incident that is not reported.

- c) Placing themselves in unsafe situations or locations by doing so.

9.1.9 For this to happen, running away behaviour needs to be viewed as a *possible indicator* that a child or young person is experiencing more deep seated problems.

9.1.10 In the course of the London mapping exercise we identified that current arrangements are not effectively filtering, identifying or accurately assessing need for the following reasons:

- Unauthorised absences of children and young people in care continue to be reported to the police as 'missing' incidents.
- Return interviews are not being routinely undertaken with children who have gone missing from care in order to identify the causes or the risks of running away.
- Running away from home is not in itself a sufficient trigger for an assessment of need for children's services.
- Return interviews are not being routinely undertaken with children who have been missing from home
- There is insufficient early intervention.

9.1.11 Effective identification of young people at risk could be achieved by the introduction of system to filter referrals at two key points. The first of these is prior to a referral being passed to the Missing Children Co-ordinator:

- a) Residential social workers and foster carers must undertake adhere to the risk assessment process described in the London procedure.⁵⁶ This process will screen out unauthorised absence and ensure that only genuine missing incidents are reported to the police.
- b) The police undertake a 'debrief' in order to verify return from a missing incident. This provides the opportunity for some discussion with the young person about the incident. The subsequent referral to the Missing Children Co-ordinator should identify if any concerns have been raised as a consequence or if the case may be recorded as 'no further action'.
- c) Other sources of referral (e.g. schools, YISP'S, YPI's, SIP's BEST's, duty and assessment teams etc) will involve young people who have not been reported as missing but whose running behaviour has been detected and is already a cause of concern.

9.1.12 Once referrals are with the Missing Children Co-ordinator another level of filtering takes place when the independent return interview is undertaken, which may result in:

- No further action
- A referral for low level preventative intervention or support from specialist service (e.g. running away service, family support, mediation, sexual exploitation service)
- A referral to the front line children's service for an initial assessment of need.
- Child protection.

9.1.13 Much of the key development work necessary around risk assessment has already been undertaken through the development of the East London protocol and incorporated into the LSCB pan London procedure for missing children.⁵⁷ Thus, tools for risk assessment and debriefing interviews have been annexed to the LSCB document.

⁵⁶ LSCB Procedure for Safeguarding Children Missing from Care and from Home

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Recommendation: Local identification and action systems should be introduced through the use of risk assessments that are integral to inter-agency missing procedures in line with the (draft) pan London LSCB procedure for safeguarding missing children. These identify young people for whom running away is an indication of need or who are putting themselves at risk by running away.

Providing immediate safety

9.1.14 There are a very few young people for whom running away will present an immediate threat to safety and wellbeing and the authority needs to develop the resources to provide emergency refuge to young people in immediate need of a safe place to stay.

9.1.15 In the long term local authorities should be working towards the provision of effective early intervention networks, systems and services based upon an assessment of local need. These should include the provision of emergency accommodation and support.

9.1.16 The local authority may wish to consider the provision of such emergency accommodation through the development of dedicated resources approved as refuge providers under Section 51 (Children Act 1989). The use of Section 51 means that young people may access emergency accommodation for a time limited period even if they don't meet the threshold criteria for Section 17 or 20 services. This provides time to supply the support services necessary to avert formal accommodation where possible.

9.1.17 The use of a fostering model to provide refuge services has a number of advantages over the residential model:

- The ability to provide access to a bed when needed without the significant resources and staffing required for a fixed unit.
- The cost of foster care in London is significantly cheaper than residential: Department of Health figures for 2004/5 show the average cost of a foster placement in inner London is £524 per week compared to £1930 for a residential placement; in outer London £501 for a foster placement compares to £1779.⁵⁸
- Flexible arrangements can be built upon existing foster care resources
- The ability to respond rapidly to young people in crisis.⁵⁹
- Foster carers are well placed to provide the personalised and individual response that young people say they need i.e. someone they can trust, as a non-judgemental and listening ear.

Recommendation: Each local authority should work towards the development of local resources in order to provide immediate safety in the form of emergency accommodation and support to young people who require it under Section 51 (Children Act). The level of resources provided should be determined by the local assessment of need and based upon police and local authority data regarding the local incidence of running away. Flexible arrangements should be developed between boroughs to facilitate the use of each others' refuge resources where young people have travelled across local authority boundaries, to minimise the need for travel in emergency situations.

10. Pan London arrangements

The London Refuge

10.1.1 The role of the London Refuge as a safety net for young people who have run away is undisputed. This evaluation found that the Refuge provides a high quality service for young people which is clearly valued by them and their parents as well as other practitioners and service providers who support this group.

⁵⁸ Cost data is taken from the Department of Health PSS EX1 returns for 2004/5.

⁵⁹ Rees, G., Franks, M., Raws, P. and Medforth, R (2005) *Responding to Young Runaways: An evaluation of 19 projects 2003 -2004*. London: DfES. CH 6.2

10.1.2 However, our research found that there are inherent difficulties in providing a centrally located resource of this kind. These include the challenging marketing implications of raising awareness of the resource across Greater London and encouraging its use particularly by boroughs that lie at a significant geographical distance from the Refuge and who may consequently question its relevance for their young people.

10.1.3 Learning from the national pilot suggests that the resources and staffing required for a fixed unit are considerably more than those of a flexible refuge and residential accommodation is costly and resource intensive in comparison with foster care (see 5.2.8). Last year's PSS EX1⁶⁰ figures show that the cost of foster care represents roughly one quarter of that of residential care in inner London and one third in outer London (see 9.1.17 above). Although there is general recognition that the Refuge provides a support service that significantly exceeds that of emergency accommodation alone, local authorities have expressed reluctance to fund the service as occupancy levels (46% for 2005/6) do not compete with the targets set for residential care provision (70%).

10.1.4 The Refuge has hitherto been supported by significant funding from central Government. In 2006 this represents nearly 40% of its overall income. However this is due to end in January 2007. Compounded by the additional factors described above, this renders the continued existence of the service in its current form, untenable in the longer term. In the short term however the role of the Refuge and its staff remains pivotal (see below).

Transitional arrangements

10.1.5 The proposals outlined above for the implementation of local strategic responses to the needs of young people who run away need to be developed over a longer time frame; local authorities will need to collate additional data reflecting the level of need for services and the anticipated costs before developing the appropriate local structures and resources. Proposals for the development of local accommodation resources for young people running away will need to be incorporated into local authorities long term strategic planning cycles:

Recommendation Effective transitional arrangements are introduced to ensure that a crisis intervention and support service is provided to young people in the interim. These are achieved as follows:

1. A working party is formed to oversee, steer and implement these recommendations, comprised of representatives of the ALG, GOL, local authorities, NGO's and Metropolitan Police Service.
2. An interim 'virtual refuge' service is created, reflecting best practice derived from the national pilots. This will be a jointly commissioned and pan London service. Accommodation may be provided by St. Christopher's utilising a combination of its existing residential and foster care provision across London. This will replace the current Refuge service and costs saved on that service may be re-invested in the interim service
3. Central funding is extended in order that the Refuge might continue with its current service until other transitional arrangements are in place and in so doing continue to meet the needs of young people requiring immediate safety and support. This will be necessary until spring 2007.

⁶⁰ http://www.ic.nhs.uk/pubs/persocservexp2005/Detailed_unit_costs_by_council_2004-05.xls/file

10.1.6 The strategic development undertaken on a local level towards final implementation of the detailed model will need to be supported by key stakeholders such as the ALG (Association of London Government), the DfES, GLADSS (Greater London Association of Directors of Social Services), the LSCB and Metropolitan Police Authority etc. However there will also be a need for more practitioner based support, information and advice about services for young people. There will also be a need to monitor and report on service development from a central vantage point.

Recommendation: A Central Support Service should be developed to support the practical implementation of the strategy at a local level. Given the considerable skill and experience developed by the London Refuge service in supporting both young people and also practitioners in the key issues surrounding running away we suggest that existing Refuge managers and staff would be most appropriately qualified to provide the necessary support functions, as below. These may include:

- Monitoring the implementation of the LSCB London Procedure by collating and analysing data received from local authorities in respect of young people missing from care and from home
- Providing support and advice to local authorities in the development of clusters of approved refuge providers
- Providing information, advice and support to foster carers as approved refuge providers
- Linking with the national Childline service to provide advice and information through Childline as required to young people needing to access emergency 'running away' services.
- Delivering joint training to Missing Children Co-ordinators and Missing Person's Unit Officers
- Providing centralised training for local authority and children's trust practitioners that support young people who run away.
- Providing a helpline for practitioners
- Developing and managing a website with accessible information about the London procedure, facts and figures about missing children, identifying risks and risk indicators etc.
- Delivering an annual event to provide a London overview of development and share good practice.

NB. A Central Support Service comprised of a service manager, an advice / information officer and an administrator would cost in the region of £100,000 per annum. This includes office space and associated costs, the production of a website (as a one off cost) and the provision of four training events a year.

Recommendation The London Safeguarding Children Board to negotiate with ChildLine on behalf of local authorities over the new arrangements for central support services.

11. A FORWARD STRATEGY

11.1.1 The aim of the strategy is to provide a consistent and pan-London response to the needs of young people who are at risk through running away in terms of ensuring their immediate safety and identifying and meeting their support needs appropriately, in order to improve outcomes for this potentially vulnerable group.

11.1.2 There are three key objectives to the action plan:

- Objective 1: To agree and implement a forward strategy
- Objective 2: To plan and manage the transition effectively
- Objective 3: To implement the detailed model

These are not presented chronologically and the activities within them can be undertaken concurrently. They are designed to be coterminous.

ACTION PLAN		
Action	Detail	Who and When
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objective 1: 	To agree and implement a forward strategy.	
1. Working party convened	The working party will implement the recommendations and will include the ALG, GOL, local authority representatives and NGO's and the Metropolitan Police Service.	ALG GOL, LA's, NGO's MPS September 2006
2. Consultation with local authorities	The LSCB will be requested to include the recommendations in their consultation with boroughs on the pan London safeguarding procedure.	ALG / LSCB By December 2006
3. Consultation with ChildLine	The London Safeguarding Children Board to negotiate with ChildLine on behalf of local authorities over the new arrangements for central support services	LSCB By December 2006
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objective 2: 	To plan and manage the transition effectively	
1. The London Refuge continues its current service in the short term.	The DfES are requested to continue funding the Refuge until the transitional arrangements for emergency accommodation and support are in place.	ALG / DfES Spring 2007
2. Transitional emergency service will be provided in the form of a pan London 'virtual refuge'	This will take over from the London Refuge and the costs saved will be re-directed in to this jointly commissioned virtual refuge, comprised of existing fostering and residential resources.	GLADSS ALG St Christopher's. Spring 2007 onwards.
3. A 'centralised support service' is established	This service provides a pan London overview by collating and making annual data available re: incidence of running away in London, providing help lines, advice, training and information and facilitating the sharing of good practice.	St Christopher's / London Refuge staff Working party ASAP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objective 3 	To implement the detailed model	
1. A member of the Local Children's Safeguarding Board is identified as the strategic lead	An LCSB lead oversees the development of structures and services which identify and support the needs of young people running away at a local level	LCSB's ASAP

<p>2. Strategic development links into new integrated structures within the children's trust</p>	<p>A local safety net is developed using early intervention approaches being developed by multi-agency support panels, based upon a welfare agenda. Local services and agencies are identified to undertake independent return interviews as part of that development.</p>	<p>Children's Trusts (as below) ASAP</p>
<p>3. A senior officer within children and young people's services collects data, monitors and reports on the incidence of young people running away to the Corporate Parenting Board and the LCSB lead.</p>	<p>Data recording and management systems are developed to record missing incidents for young people in care and monitor services to young people running away from home.</p> <p>This senior officer considers introducing an additional role at practitioner level with responsibility for co-ordinating the 'risk' assessment process and service response to young people that run away. This 'Missing Children Co-ordinator' may be located in the statutory or voluntary sector according to local structures and services. This may be a dedicated or partial post depending on local need and circumstances.</p>	<p>Senior officer with lead responsibility ASAP</p>
<p>4. Local identification and action systems are introduced in order to trigger service responses for the most vulnerable young people</p>	<p>Risk assessments are undertaken at two key stages to screen out those not in need of independent return interviews or follow up intervention, focussing resources on only those most at risk.</p>	<p>LCSB lead / Senior officer with lead responsibility / Missing Children co-ordinator ASAP</p>
<p>5. Local clusters of approved 'refuge providers' are developed according to borough need.</p>	<p>Foster carers wishing to be approved as refuge providers under Section 51 (Children Act 1989) are identified. The number of refuge providers will be determined by local monitoring data. Boroughs 'share' resources in emergency situations based upon cross-borough flexible arrangements and protocols, minimising the need for late night transport.</p>	<p>LCSB and senior officer leads Supported by Central support service ASAP</p>

Appendix One

The Role of the London Refuge

1. Introduction

1.1 This report builds upon and should be read in conjunction with the snapshot evaluation undertaken by Barnardo's research team in January 2006. As the snapshot evaluation was undertaken relatively recently, earlier findings relating to certain aspects such as the quality of the service and its value to young people, are not repeated here.

1.2 Rather, this is a summary report framing the role of the London Refuge in the wider context of issues and current service responses as presented in the main report. A range of perspectives from various stakeholders have been taken into account in drawing its conclusions including:

- Managers and staff at the Refuge and St Christopher's.
- Young people who have used the service
- Children and young people's services from the five boroughs participating in the case study research
- Specialist projects for young people running away
- Missing Person's and other representatives of the Metropolitan police.
- Voluntary sector organisations providing homeless support to young people aged 16 and over
- The Association of London Government
- The Department for Education and Skills

1.3 The scope of this report has been limited by an absence of financial information with regard to the current annual running costs of the London Refuge. It has therefore not been possible to present a cost analysis of the financial implications of service expansion or reduction, or to assess the effectiveness of the service according to principles of 'best value'.

2. Current Funding Arrangements.

2.1 The forecast income for 2006/7 is as follows:

Central Government	275,000
NSPCC	200,000
LA charges (ALDCS)	101,000
Family Support	
Connexions	35,000
Safeguarding Children	50,000
Total	661,000

2.2 The London Refuge has had a difficult funding history (see appendix 2) and the purpose of the snapshot evaluation was to inform an interim funding decision. As a consequence, the Refuge has received additional government monies which ceases in January 2007. Other funding streams are contingent upon that core funding being available. The contributions from local authorities are variable and based upon the level of service use by each individual authority.

2.3 Next year the service will face a deficit of £250,000. In order to maintain its current level of service provision the Refuge must either procure increased contributions from local authorities, or attract

new funders, or achieve a combination of both. Given that local authority contributions are based upon level of use, this suggests that the Refuge would have to increase usage, either by:

- Marketing its services more effectively to local authorities in order to increase occupancy, or
- Developing new services in addition to refuge accommodation which local authorities or others would consider a funding priority.

The alternative is to reduce or re-focus the services provided in order to substantially reduce running costs.

2.4 These options have been considered within the scope of this review and the presentation of the findings addresses them accordingly.

3. Referral patterns 2005 – 2006.

3.1 The pattern of referrals identified within the annual report for 2005-6 shows that:

- The number of admissions to the Refuge rose slightly from 213 in 2004-5 to 226 in 2005-6.
- The number of boroughs with admissions to the Refuge fell slightly from 26 in 2004-5 to 24 in 2005-6
- Seven boroughs that had admissions in 2004-5 did not in 2005-6. These were outer London boroughs (apart from two admissions from the Corporation of London and two from Merton) and accounted for 9% (19 of 213) admissions for 2004-5.
- Five boroughs that did not have admissions in 2004-5 did so in 2005-6. These were all outer London boroughs and accounted for 5% of admissions overall (10 of 226)
- Of the 19 boroughs who had admissions in both 2004-5 and 2005-6:
 - Six had a decline in admissions (total reduction 34). The highest reductions include those for Newham which fell from eleven to one admission, Hackney which fell by eight to 45 admissions and Haringey which fell by six admissions to eight.
 - Ten boroughs had an increase in admissions (total increase 34). Those boroughs with the highest increase of admissions included Waltham Forest which rose from four to 13 and Hammersmith, and Fulham with an increase from five to nine admissions.
 - The admissions of two boroughs, Camden (20) and Lambeth (14) stayed the same.
 - 22 admissions were of young people from outside London and the origin of one admission was unknown. This compares to 28 in 2005-5.

3.2 Referral patterns have not changed significantly over the last two years. A high level of admissions from proximate boroughs is consistent with previous referral patterns. Of the 226 admissions to the Refuge for the period 2005-6, 45 were of young people from Hackney (20%). A further 51 admissions were of young people from Camden or Islington. Combined, these represent 42% of the annual admissions, falling slightly, by 5%, from the previous year.

3.3 The snapshot evaluation found that there was a likely link between the building of relationships with an individual borough and the level of admissions of that borough's young people (see Appendix 2 p3). This was evidenced by an increase in admissions from Newham, Lambeth and Southwark following effort put in to developing relationships. In 2005-6 the level of admissions from Lambeth stayed the same but from Newham and Southwark both reduced, bringing the total admissions for the three boroughs to 25 (compared to 37 the previous year). This suggests that the link between concerted relationship building and increased admissions may be difficult to sustain consistently over

a period of time. As highlighted in the previous report, a high turnover of staff within referring agencies makes the task of raising awareness of the Refuge amongst practitioners a challenging one.

- 3.4 The data shows consistently low levels of admission from the outer London boroughs, and informants to this research from those areas felt it unlikely that this situation would change. Many practitioners had not heard of the Refuge but those that had, perceived it as a city resource and said that young people from outer boroughs seldom travelled in to town, staying locally when they ran away:

“I feel that the Refuge could be a good resource, but how would you get young people running away in Redbridge across London to access its services, especially at night time? It’s just not practical for Redbridge services in that context, but I do feel that the Refuge could play a valuable role in terms of providing advocacy and advice for young runaways in London in the future.” (Social Worker)

4. Referring agencies and access routes

- 4.1 2005-6 has seen a rise in the number of young people being admitted to the refuge that are already known to children and young people's services from 64% in 2004-5 to 81% in 2005-6. Refuge managers attribute this to tightened threshold criteria for accommodation by the local authority due to the introduction of the Performance Assessment Framework indicator for stability of placement for children looked after (CF/A1)⁶¹. It was felt that this indicator can act as a disincentive for local authorities to provide emergency accommodation, or to place 14 to 16 year olds, as placements for that age group are more likely to disrupt. However, the perceived raising of threshold criteria has not resulted in a rise in admissions to the Refuge.
- 4.2 Identifying referral routes to the Refuge is problematic. The largest proportion of admissions is through direct access referrals from young people themselves (nearly one third) and it is difficult to establish how many of these were made on the advice of other agencies. For example, admissions on the basis of actual referrals from children and young people's services represent approximately 17%, yet 81% of young people are already known to social services. It seems likely therefore that many young people will come via children's services without being recorded as a young person who has run away or as an official referral to the refuge. Unfortunately there is no guarantee that young people being sent on 'informally' to the Refuge actually end up accessing the service and this represents a significant gap in the safety net, through which young people who are potentially at risk can become lost to services.
- 4.3 Admissions following referrals from helplines such as Childline or the Runaway's Helpline are the second largest proportion at 20%. Admissions via the police represent 13%.

Referrals that do not result in admission

- 4.4 Referrals do not automatically result in admission. In total there were 425 referrals to the service in 2005-6, of which 226 (53%) resulted in admission. There are a variety of reasons for this:
- The Refuge will generally turn down young people who are over 16 as there are more options available to them in terms of emergency accommodation.
 - The Refuge will not accept referrals from outside the London borough boundary unless the young person is very vulnerable and at risk.
 - Some young people are accepted but are not there when the taxi arrives to pick them up.

⁶¹ Reference CF/A1 Stability of placements of children looked after. Councils aim to have no more than 16% of the children they look after experiencing three or more moves in a year. National PAF data shows that 89% councils achieved this in 2004-05 but due to changes in definitions and data collection it is not possible to accurately assess improvement on performance from previous years. National Statistics (December 2005) Social Services Assessment Review Indicators p17-20.

5. Numbers of young people admitted to the Refuge

- 5.1 Admissions to the Refuge do not represent the actual number of young people using the service. Some young people use the Refuge more than once and these occasions may be spread out over a period longer than a year. The number of occasions on which a young person has used the Refuge is recorded but it is not possible to disaggregate this data for 2005-6.
- 5.2 The majority of admissions to the service in 2005-6 were for young people aged 14-15 years old (65%). Of the 226 admissions, 35 were for 16 year olds (15%) and a further 14% (n=31) were under 14. The remainder were over 17.
- 5.3 The service sees low numbers of young people running from care. Those who do use the service have usually come from outside London. Coming to the Refuge is not usually a choice for this group but rather they have been referred by other agencies such as the police.

6. Occupancy levels and cost effectiveness.

- 6.1 Data available for 2005-6 shows an occupancy rate of 46%. As discussed in the snapshot report the link between occupancy and 'effectiveness' can be misleading, particularly in relation to achieving positive outcomes for children. It is not possible to ascertain how many young people the Refuge has successfully prevented from being looked after by the local authority, nor how many young people 'at risk' it has provided with a gateway to children's services. It is in the nature of 'preventative' work that longer term outcomes can be difficult to determine and this has been beyond the capacity of this evaluation. A more meaningful analysis of the effectiveness of the Refuge as both gateway and gatekeeper to mainstream children's services would require more sophisticated data than are currently available from the service or the local authorities whose young people use it.

7. The Role of the Refuge in a pan-London Strategy.

- 7.1 Informants to this research contributed a range of views and perspectives about the current and potential role of the Refuge in the future.
- 7.2 The service's role as a safety net for young people is undisputed, and the positive comments made about the resource testify to the skills and experience of staff in working with some very vulnerable young people:

"The Refuge has been very helpful particularly in safeguarding vulnerable young people who will not return to placement or co-operate with the plans social services has for them. They are good at opening up a direct dialogue with these young people." (Emergency Duty team Social Worker)

"I think it's a really important resource. If a young person decides they can't live at home, they're very vulnerable and it's good to know they have somewhere to go other than living on the streets." (Voluntary sector practitioner)

"The Refuge is particularly successful at facilitating return to a safe place, partly because this is a key objective but also because they have developed a real expertise in this work." (Refuge Steering Group member)

- 7.3 Alternative perspectives were offered on the occupancy rates of the Refuge and illustrate some of the complexity surrounding its use as an emergency resource providing accommodation:

"As a highly resourced and expensive resource it has to be asked whether it is used enough... There is debate about where these children would go if the Refuge wasn't there, but the Refuge has never had to turn anyone away because it has no capacity."

Children's service manager

The real value of the Refuge lies in its being a safety net. This becomes very clear when it is full...there have been two occasions in the past 18 months when this has been the case. This makes for a difficult situation as there are no alternatives...If it was a resource that was always full, we wouldn't be able to use it!"

Voluntary sector provider.

- 7.4 It is clear that the Refuge is considered to offer a great deal more than emergency accommodation, and its expertise at advocating for young people emerged strongly, even if it is a role not universally appreciated. This demonstrates the value of the 'gateway' as well as the 'gatekeeping' role that it fulfils:

"You know that they're going to have an advocate in dealing with the local authority; once they are there, social services have to do something [for higher risk cases]."

Voluntary sector practitioner

"Relations with the Refuge can be tricky as they will always advocate on the behalf of the young person when there is conflict about whether the young person should go home. It does however provide safe space for young people."

Manager in children's services.

- 7.5 Concerns were expressed that although the Refuge provides a very valuable safety net for young people, it is not always used appropriately by local authorities:

"(I) think it's a good resource although I would be concerned that the Refuge could be abused by local authorities who might use it to 'dump' young people."

Voluntary sector practitioner.

"There is a tension arising in the Refuge's role with social services sometimes using it as their own resource and there are anecdotal stories of young people being sent to the police station in order to get a lift to the Refuge...care needs to be taken to ensure that the young person is not caught in the middle as these tensions play out."

Manager in children's services

This was not such a cause for concern for managers and staff at the Refuge however:

"On the whole local authorities do not refer inappropriately as most young people presenting at the Refuge don't need to be 'looked after'. The Refuge management team are all qualified as social workers with local authority backgrounds and are therefore highly equipped to carry out assessments of need. For most young people the reason for running is family conflict and this can be resolved through the family support worker after all parties have had some breathing space."

This is consistent with the Refuge's approach that an important part of its role is to prevent young people from becoming looked after by the local authority, and that the most positive outcome is a return home for those for whom it is safe to do so (see appendix two).

8. Summary and conclusions

- 8.1 The findings from the main research show that significant development of structures and service responses is required on a local level in order that young people at risk through running away become 'visible' to children and young people's services. Generally, specialist resources at a local level are indicative of local authority investment and commitment to identifying and assessing the needs of young people in order to provide early intervention.

- 8.2 However, in the case of the London Refuge, there are clear indications of reluctance on behalf of individual boroughs to commit financial resources to a Greater London resource that may not be used on a regular basis by young people from the local area. Local authorities are also reluctant to release financial resources for young people who may not meet their service threshold criteria. In addition, there may be an argument to say that any pan-London resource of this kind might be counter productive in terms of encouraging local authorities to develop the systems and services necessary to provide local early intervention.
- 8.3 Referral and annual report data for the years 2004-5 and 2005-6 suggest that it would not be possible to increase the level of local authority use of the Refuge to the degree that the shortfall in funding for next year would require. The consequence is that the Refuge can not continue to provide emergency accommodation unless it can attract a significant level of funding from an alternative source.
- 8.4 However, there is a high level of marketable skill and expertise amongst the senior staff in the service that has been developed over a significant period of time. The implementation of a consistent pan-London strategic response to young people who are at risk of running away will require a centralised and supporting role to co-ordinate and advise local authorities in developing the necessary resources at the local level.
- 8.5 Therefore, in line with the recommendations presented in part three (10.1.5), we recommend that consideration should be given to the potential role of the London Refuge in providing a central support service to support practical implementation of the strategy, as below:

Recommendation: A Central Support Service should be developed to support the practical implementation of the strategy at a local level, over a two or three year period. This may include:

- Monitoring the implementation of the LCPC London Procedure by collating and analysing data received from local authorities in respect of young people missing from care and from home
- Providing support and advice to local authorities in the development of clusters of approved refuge providers
- Providing information, advice and support to foster carers as approved refuge providers
- Delivering joint training to Missing Children Co-ordinators and Missing Person's Unit Officers
- Providing centralised training for local authority and children's trust practitioners that support young people who run away.
- Providing a helpline and advice line for practitioners
- Developing and managing a website to accessible information about the London procedure, facts and figures about missing children, identifying risks and risk indicators

Appendix Two

Snapshot Evaluation of the London Refuge for Young People

The purpose of this report is to inform a decision on interim funding of the London Refuge until March 2007.

As outlined in the Project Initiation Document the report will incorporate the perspectives of steering board members and service managers interviewed, and address the following topics:

- Current funders
- Referral patterns
- Occupancy levels
- Quality and safety of service
- Effectiveness of service
- Recommendations

The report is based on an analysis of the following data:

Interviews conducted with : Alasdair Duerden (DfES)
(Tracey Birch & Claire Ryan in attendance)
Ron Giddens & Brian Smith (St Christopher's fellowship)
Janet Glenn – Millanaise & Lorna Simpson (London Refuge)
Nasima Patel (NSPCC)
Christine Christie (London Child Protection Committee)

Documents examined include:

London Refuge Annual Reports & Statistics:	2002-03 2003-04 2004-05
Statistics:	April '05 – November '05
ALG Review of London Refuge	2003
Regulation 33 Reports	April-November 2005
CSCI Inspection Report	August 2005
St. Christopher's Fellowship Annual Review:	2005
Beyond Refuge: Research on progress of Runaways discharged from London Refuge (draft report) NSPCC 2005.	

Initial interview & care plan templates in use at London Refuge.

Current Funders

The current annual income of the London Refuge is approximately £720,000

DfES	£230,000	(community based refuge funding)
ODPM	£100,000	
GLADDs	£110,000	
NSPCC	£200,000	

DfES	£ 50,000	(safeguarding children grant)
Connexions	£ 30,000	(provided as 1 f/t worker)

The London Refuge has had a difficult funding history. Originally run by The Children's Society it was managed by Centrepoin in partnership with the NSPCC from 2000-2002 when St. Christopher's took it over. The service was restructured and funding from the DoH, the London boroughs via GLADDS, NSPCC and The Children's Society was put in place. Over the next two years the 'toplicing' arrangement of funding from London boroughs was contested and only additional funds from the NSPCC enabled the refuge to remain open. The community based refuge funding stream, along with a renegotiation of funding from the Local Authorities (who currently contribute on the basis of their previous years usage), has secured the refuges financial position over the last 2 years and enabled it to attract additional funds.

Outstanding DfES/ALG concerns to be addressed in the course of the wider 'Missing in London' research include:

- The current funding level might not be sustainable as the Refuge may not represent a priority for a sufficient number of funders.
- The Refuge may not represent best value in terms of achieving ECM outcomes for young runaways in London.

Referral patterns

DfES/ALG concerns about referral patterns include:

- Referrals appearing to be made by only a limited number of London boroughs.
- Uncertainty as to whether a single refuge can provide a truly pan-London service.

The pattern of referrals by Local Authorities identified in the London Refuge's 2004-5 annual report shows that one-quarter of admissions in the period were of Hackney young people (53 of 213), almost a further quarter (48 of 213) were from Camden or Islington. Thus nearly half of all admissions during this time period were from those boroughs most proximate to the Refuge. Figures for the last eight months reveal a reduction in referrals from Hackney, whose young people represent 22% (33 of 144) of admissions, while 24% (35 of 144) came from Camden or Islington during the period.

St Christopher's and the refuge managers believe the high level of referrals from these three boroughs is explicable in terms of the well-established relationships and high awareness of the refuge. This interpretation is supported by the relatively high level of admissions last year from Newham, Lambeth and Southwark (37) where good working relationships had recently been developed. It is also supported by the changing patterns of referral over time:

For example:

- In 2002-3 admissions of Hackney young people numbered only 16, while 13 were admitted from Croydon in the same year, but no Croydon young people were admitted in 2004-5.
- Admissions of Lambeth and Lewisham young people were similar in 2002-3 & 2003-4, but only one Lewisham young person was admitted in 2004-5 compared with 14 Lambeth admissions.

Admissions do not represent actual numbers of young people as one quarter of admissions are repeat admissions. However, the figures do indicate that awareness of Refuge is an important factor in

explaining referral patterns, and that relatively high numbers of admissions have been made from some non-proximate boroughs over the last three years. While there may be other relevant factors, the patterns do also suggest that awareness of the Refuge may fall off rapidly with staff turnover. This may be particularly likely in non-proximate boroughs. The high turnover of staff within referring agencies such as social services making it difficult to ensure that there is a consistent level of awareness of the project at practitioner level. Steps have been taken to try to address this by disseminating the Runaways Protocol and offering to visit staff teams. The refuge manager has succeeded in making three such visits this year, but these did not result in any noticeable increase in referrals from the targeted Boroughs.

In 2004-5 admissions were made of young people from 26 of the London boroughs. In general the numbers of admissions from the most socially deprived boroughs were the highest, with very low numbers of admissions from relatively affluent boroughs (e.g. Kensington & Chelsea, Richmond, Redbridge, Ealing).

High Awareness	High level of deprivation
Low Awareness	Low level of deprivation

While we do not know what other factors may be at play, the available statistics suggest that it is the combination of level of awareness of the London Refuge with level of deprivation that may be key to explaining referral patterns. While geographical location is likely to play a part in the admissions (and certainly the re-admissions) of 'local' young people, it is the level of deprivation combined with the enhanced awareness consequent upon proximity that is probably most significant.

However, there are legitimate concerns that the London Refuge only reaches a small proportion of young people who go missing from home or care and are in need of support. How services could reach and provide for a wider population of absent and vulnerable young people is a legitimate question for the 'Missing in London' research.

“Of all the children out there in trouble only those who run away and become visible - being picked up by the police or self-referring (and then only those who know about it phone the Refuge). These numbers are likely to be very small.” (Steering Group Member)

Occupancy levels

The occupancy rate in 2004-05 was 51% against a target rate of 70%. 241 young people spent a mean of 4.6 days at the refuge (median 7 days). 50% of all admissions were for 3 days or less. An analysis of the figures available for the past 8 months shows increased occupancy levels in a number of months (April 65%, October 58%, November 77%). It is important to recognise that the target rate is the occupancy target rate for residential children’s homes and has not been developed specifically in relation to refuge provision. The rapid turnover of occupants would in itself reduce the occupancy rates as the most intensive work with young people (and therefore staff occupation) is on day of admission and day of departure. The short, intensive nature of the intervention with young people means that ‘down time’ naturally occurs between admissions rather than during the middle period of occupancy as it would were residents in place over weeks/months.

The overall 'Missing in London' research will attempt to identify the occupancy levels, and occupancy target rates, for other refuges/emergency accommodation, as set in Service Level Agreements, in order to establish whether the target rate for the refuge is set at an appropriate and comparable level. An appropriate comparator would be Women’s Aid refuges for women escaping domestic violence. There is an overall issue about cost-effectiveness that also needs to be considered in

relation to occupancy, and any other options for providing emergency accommodation to young people who run away need to be explored.

However, an over-emphasis on occupancy as a 'bodies-in-beds' *output* potentially pulls services away from their proper focus on *outcomes* for clients. In the context of the ECM outcomes framework the core evaluative question needs to be not 'how many bed-nights were used?' but rather 'what difference was the service able to make to the lives of young people?' It would therefore be useful for the 'Missing in London' research to consider what the service actually *does* with young people rather than just the bed/night or occupancy rate. The service, and any alternative provision, need to be evaluated for the effectiveness of the support they provide, not merely as bed resources.

Quality and safety of service

The refuge provides direct access accommodation for children and young people running away from home but also provides additional services including:

- Family support and informal mediation
- Signposting / referral to other services
- Support for education

Most referrals for the service are received at night. Police, originating authority and parents are informed as appropriate. Young people using the service will have an initial interview to gather background information, assess risk and gain the young person's views of what they want to happen. The interview form is then used as the basis for the care plan. If there are any child protection issues the young person is referred to social services. In other cases the project will attempt to support the young person without referring to social services as the threshold for SSD intervention is high.

The London Refuge is a Registered Children's Home under section 60 of the Children Act 1989. As such it is subject to monthly Regulation 33 visits and unannounced CSCI inspections. I have examined the Regulation 33 reports for the period April-November 2005. These reports provide extremely positive comments on:

- the views of young people on the refuge and the help it provided
- staff confidence in the management of young people
- staff morale
- staff supervision
- young people's safety and privacy
- the emphasis on education
- the physical environment
- 'an evening meal of exceptional quality'

The CSCI inspection report (August 2005) is also very positive about the quality and safety of the service. There were no recommendations for improvement from the previous inspection in December 2004, and just two requirements arising from the 2005 inspection – both concerning record keeping in relation to employment records. The report comments on the quality of provision in relation to the ECM outcomes. The Refuge is reported as being 'comfortable and homely'. Care plans are regularly reviewed, and young people are actively involved in this process and in decisions made about them. Record keeping in relation to young people is up-to-date and records are kept securely. Staff support is excellent in terms of helping young people maintain contact with family and friends. Staff are competent and experienced and thoroughly committed to achieving positive outcomes for the children using the refuge.

“There are strict procedures in place for gathering and checking information regarding the health and wellbeing of each child. There are a range of policies and procedures in

place which show that the welfare and safety of the children resident is of paramount importance”

“The home has procedures in place to ensure children are safe from harm, confidentiality is respected at all times and complaints are addressed with speed and sensitivity. The home has adequate procedures for dealing with children who abscond and all significant events are shared with the responsible authorities.”

(CSCI August 2005)

Effectiveness of service

The effectiveness of a service can only be assessed in relation to its achievement of clearly identified outcomes for its clients. St Christopher’s and the London Refuge managers were clear about the immediate outcomes the service intended to achieve:

- Getting children off the streets and in a safe place
- Getting them back home
- Keeping them at home/reducing missing episodes

Stakeholders interviewed for this snapshot evaluation believed that there was reasonable agreement about the appropriateness of these core outcomes amongst funders and other stakeholders.

“There is general consensus amongst stakeholders as to these outcomes, particularly around the provision of a safe environment, although some stakeholders may have more of an interest in specific outcomes e.g. the Government and Police are likely to emphasise the need for a reduction in repeat episodes. There is some disagreement between Social Services and the Refuge about the best means of facilitating good outcomes. For example, whereas Social Services may wish to see respite provided until a return home can be achieved, the Refuge sees itself as having a greater role in the assessment of needs with respect to returning a young person to a safe environment. In general however, the key stakeholders are in agreement about the project’s means for facilitating good outcomes.” (Steering Group Member)

However, another Steering Group member expressed some concerns:

“In theory there is agreement but in practice [...] suspect not. [...] voluntary organisations like the Refuge increasingly must adopt an advocacy role in securing the support from the local authority that the young person is due. It is difficult to put such issues on the table because inevitably they boil down to resources. For this reason, formal agreements should be put in place when developing such services that tie local authorities down in respect of their statutory duties under sections 17 and 20 of the Children Act.” (Steering Group Member)

The underpinning philosophy of the refuge is that no matter how difficult the home situation is (other than where child protection concerns are present), it is preferable to a child or young person going into care. This philosophy is supported by the research evidence of poor outcomes for looked-after children in terms of educational attainment, mental health, unemployment, teenage pregnancy and unstable/exploitative personal relationships in young adulthood.

“The longer a child is out of the family the harder it is to get them home. As soon as they have identified that there is a route home that work begins. The project’s own research however suggests that some young people may want to and may benefit from staying longer in order to give all parties a break....

The family support worker will make initial contact with the family and introduce herself as soon as possible so that return work can begin. She will work with them to identify the sources of conflict and begin to resolve some of the issues. If a referral to social services is necessary she will work with the family to encourage them to engage. If it is felt that longer term work is needed [and the family are willing] she will undertake this over a period of time and provide consistent outreach support. She will also be involved in the discharge meeting as the young person returns home....Recent figures show 11% of repeat admissions had received family support compared with 89% that had not.”
(Refuge Manager)

The best evidence of outcomes for young people using the Refuge currently available is contained in the draft NSPCC research report *Beyond Refuge: Supporting Young Runaways* (Macaskill and Berridge, 2005). The research is based on a small convenience sample of 22 young people, their families and social workers. The young people were effusive in their praise of the refuge. Only two could find nothing positive to say, and they had both absconded very soon after admission. Although young people’s satisfaction is not in itself an outcome, a positive view of the service is a pre-requisite to engagement, which is in turn essential to achieving positive outcomes. There is no doubt that the outcome of immediate safety is being achieved and this is done in a way that is appreciated by clients. Some of the restrictions associated with refuge life were not so appealing to young people, but are clearly adequate to ensuring safety.

Between one and five months after the 22 young people had left the refuge, parents of 19 of them were interviewed concerning whether family life was better or worse than when their son/daughter had run away. Ten thought things were better, four that things remained the same and five that everything had deteriorated. The 10 parents who thought things were better referred to young people having learned from mistakes, being more polite and more ready to apologise. In seven of these cases life at school was also described as being more settled. Parents attributed improvements mainly to the crisis of running away combined with time spent at the refuge, which provided an opportunity for a fresh start. In three cases it was felt that the family support worker had facilitated communication between young person and parent. It is clear from the report that this member of staff is particularly skilled at gaining the trust and engagement of families who have previously avoided, or had very poor past experiences of, professional help. For seven out of the nine for whom there was deterioration, or no improvement beyond a brief ‘honeymoon’ immediately after their return home, school problems had not been resolved, and eight of them had run away again. These findings support the emphasis placed by the refuge on the re-engagement of young people with education.

The research found poor outcomes for young people who felt compelled to return home because no alternative existed. Repeat running continued to be a problem for the majority in the sample. There was no evidence that the services being offered post-discharge, to young people with an established history of running away, were making much difference to their problems.

There is no evidence available for longer term outcomes for young people who have used the London Refuge. Research in the field suggests effective early intervention, that prevents the establishment of a repeat pattern of going missing from home, is the best response. It seems likely that in such cases the refuge is able to provide a high quality, brief intervention that is liable to succeed. Cases where young people are already entrenched in a ‘risky’ culture, where running away has become their regular coping strategy, and where family problems are many, and attitudes to the young person have become antagonistic or rejecting, are far harder to ‘turn around’. For such young people there may be very little to go home to, and a more appropriate positive outcome may be re-engagement with education, a stable placement and the establishment of a supportive relationship with a key worker or carer.

Conclusion and recommendations

The London Refuge clearly provides a safe and high quality service that is highly valued by young people and many of their parents. There are issues of differential levels of referral by London boroughs. Proximity plays a natural part in this, but fluctuations appear to be largely due to the loss of knowledge resulting from high staff turnover in social work teams. The issue of occupancy levels in relation to cost-effectiveness is one that must be considered in relation to the effectiveness of the service in achieving positive outcomes for young people. Both these issues need further investigation in the context of developing a pan-London response to the problem of young people who run away. This will be provided by the 'Missing in London' research.

The long-term future of the London Refuge should depend on its role within, and potential contribution to, a strategic approach to the problem of missing young people across London. The recommendation of this report is that funding of the London Refuge should continue at the current level during the financial year 2006-7, and that consideration of future refuge provision for young people who run away from home or care should be informed by the 'Missing in London' research which will report in August 2006.

Sara Scott
Principal Research Officer
Barnardo's Policy and Research Unit

11.1.06

Appendix Three

DRAFT 4



DRAFT for consultation

London Procedure

for

Safeguarding Children Missing from Care and Home

London Child Protection Committee
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London SE1 0AL

www.londoncpc.gov.uk

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Acknowledgement

The London Child Protection Committee thanks the London Borough of Croydon, the Metropolitan Police and St Christopher's Fellowship for their contribution to developing this procedure

This Procedure is based on DoH Guidance from November 2002

1. Introduction

This Procedure is designed to support an effective collaborative safeguarding response from all agencies involved when a child goes missing. It aims to provide guidance for assessing both the risk of the child going missing and the risk to the child when they are missing. The Procedure describes appropriate staff/agency actions to locate the child, to effect their return and to identify the issues which caused, and may continue to cause, the child to go missing.

2. Principles

The following principles should be adopted by all agencies in relation to identifying and locating children who go missing:

- The safety and welfare of the child is paramount
- Locating and returning the child to a safe environment is the main objective
- Child Protection Procedures will be actively considered for children under 18 where sexual exploitation may be a factor or where the child is associating with individuals who give rise to concern
- Notification to the Police will only take place following a Risk Assessment and in clearly defined circumstances as set out in this Procedure
- The Police will act on **any** report of a child missing on the understanding that a Risk Assessment has been completed.
- Every '*missing*' child who returns will be interviewed by someone other than the direct carer.
- Where the child is known to the Children's Social Services or meets the criteria for referral to the Children's Social Services, the Local Authority will ensure that there is a range of service options to address the child's needs when they return.

3. Definitions & Other Procedures

Missing:

For the purpose of this Procedure a child (i.e. a young person under the age of 18 years) is to be considered '*missing*' if their whereabouts are unknown, whatever the circumstances of their disappearance. They will be considered missing until they are located and their well-being or otherwise is established.

Unauthorised Absence:

This category is critical to the clarification of roles of the Police and Children's Social Services. Some children absent themselves from home or care, for a short period and then return, often their whereabouts are known. These children may be testing boundaries, an activity which is well within the range of normal teenage behaviour. These children have taken '*unauthorised absence*', and would not usually come within the definition of '*missing*' for this Procedure. If a child's whereabouts are known then they cannot be 'missing'. Unauthorised absences must be carefully monitored as the child may subsequently go missing.

3.1. The London Child Protection Procedures

The *London Child Protection Procedures* provide information which may help staff to recognise and/or manage circumstances in which children who are missing may be experiencing harm or be at risk of harm (*See London Child Protection Procedures Sections 4 and 9*). This includes: children subject to fabricated or induced illness or female genital mutilation; abuse by children, domestic violence, missing children and families, sexually exploited children, trafficked children and asylum seeking children. For several of these circumstances there are supplementary, detailed London multi-agency procedures:

- Safeguarding Children Missing from School, *LCPC 2006*
- Safeguarding Trafficked and Exploited Children, *LCPC 2006*
- Safeguarding Children Abused through Sexual Exploitation, *LCPC 2006*

These, and the *London Procedures* can be accessed on the website: www.londoncpc.gov.uk

3.2. Children Missing from School

Children who are missing from school may also be missing from care or home and at risk. Education staff should follow the London *Guidance on Safeguarding Children Missing from School (LCPC, 2006)*.

If a member of Education staff becomes aware that a child may be missing, they should try to establish with the parents or carers, what has happened. If this is not possible, or the child is missing, the Designated Teacher should, together with the teacher, assess the child's vulnerability, as per the *Guidance on Safeguarding Children Missing from School, LCPC 2006*) or by completing the Risk Assessment (*See Appendix 7 of this Procedure*).

Based on the assessment they may complete the Police Referral Form (*See Appendix 7*) and refer the child to the Police Missing Persons Unit (*See Section 5 below for the definition of missing*).

If it comes to the notice of a member of Education staff that a child who was missing, has returned, that member of staff should try to establish whether Police or Children's Social Services were involved in returning the child to their home and if not, inform Police and/ or Children's Social Services.

Children who go missing frequently place themselves at risk and the child's safety must be prioritised over any requests to keep information confidential.

3.3. Asylum Seeking Children

There are complex issues facing Asylum Seeking children. Information about some children's whereabouts is not always maintained due to the transient nature of their accommodation arrangements. Agencies must however, be alert to the fact that some children are trafficked into, within and out of the UK for custom related reasons, to be abused and exploited for commercial gain, including through sex, for domestic servitude etc. (*See Safeguarding Trafficked and Exploited Children, LCPC 2006 & Safeguarding Children Abused through Sexual Exploitation, LCPC 2006*).

The Local Authority, Police and other agency response to an Asylum Seeking child going missing should be exactly the same as for all other children, whether they are Looked After or living in the community.

3.4. National Missing Persons Helpline

Local Authorities fund the Helpline's Missing from Care Team that provides a specialist service to Social Services when any of their 'looked after' children go missing. You can contact the Missing from Care Team on 020 8392 4527.

The National Missing Persons Helpline (NMPH) is dedicated to helping missing people, their families and those who care for them. It has information sharing agreements with the police.

The NMPH 24-hour Freephone confidential Helpline 0500 700 700 takes calls from families and police reporting missing people.

NMPH's Runaway Helpline 0808 800 70 70 is a national 24 hour freephone Helpline for anyone aged 17 or under who has run away or been forced to leave home. Confidential advice is given, referrals made to other organisations and it can help a child or young person get to a place of safety or pass on a message

4. Planning Prior to an Incident

4.1. Looked After Children

Research shows that children looked after by the Local Authority are over-represented in the cohort of children who go missing.

Prior to each placement of child Children's Social Services staff – placing Social Workers, Residential Workers and Foster Carers; must assess the risks of the child absenting him/herself. The points set out in 4.3 below should be considered and be recorded in the Placement Plan.

4.2. Children who go missing from home

Children living in the community are often well known to Accident & Emergency Services, Schools and other Education Establishments or the Youth Service. Where a parent or staff member has concerns that a child may go missing, the level of concern and support plan for the child should be based on the points set out below.

4.3. Social Care Pre-incident Risk Assessment

Where there is concern that a child may go missing from Care or home, the Social Care Pre-incident Risk Assessment at *Appendix 2* should be used to assess:

- Child's view on current placement/stability of their relationships at home
- Level of supervision/support that care staff propose to provide for the child
- The degree of risk to the child if they go missing – using the Social Care Risk Assessment Record at *Appendix 3*
- The views of parents/carers on their child's needs and the action that needs to be taken if their child is missing
- Consideration of any external influences which may result in a child's removal without consent (*See also Safeguarding Trafficked and Exploited Children, LCPC 2006*)

The child should have explained to him/her what actions will be taken if he/she absents him/herself without permission. Where considered appropriate, the child should be given a copy of this pre-incident assessment. The Social Care Pre-incident Risk Assessment should be recorded on the child's file in all agencies working with the child.

Wherever possible staff should enhance their ability to make a Social Care Pre-incident Risk Assessment by acquainting themselves with the current body of knowledge about children who go missing (*See Appendix 1: Current Research Findings in Relation to Children Going Missing from Care and Home*).

4.4. Information Sharing Form

Where the Risk Assessment indicates that there is a high risk of a child going missing, it is good practice for residential unit Staff/Foster Carers to prepare an Information Sharing Form containing the information the police and other agencies will need to locate the child if they do go missing (*See Appendix 4* for the Looked After Child Information Sharing Form). This form should always be provided to the Police at the time of reporting a Looked After Child missing.

4.5. Significance of Children Missing from Home/ Care

There is an expectation that parents/ guardians will report their child/ young person is missing. Failure to do so may be raised as a child protection issue and the London Child Protection Procedures (*Sections 5 to 8*) must be followed.

In responding to and managing an individual child/ young person's absence from home/Care, agencies should be alert to the potential significance of repeat missing episodes by a child. Often children who repeatedly go missing are viewed as 'a problem' and insufficient consideration is given to the reason why they keep absenting themselves (*See Reasons for Going Missing in Appendix 1*).

5. Responding to an Incident

Summary of Response Steps:

- 1) Decide whether the child is 'missing'
- 2) Complete the Social Care Risk Assessment Record
- 3) Notify the Police as soon as possible

5.1 Category of Absence

Proper consideration needs to be given to whether the child's circumstances are an '*unauthorised absence*', or whether he/she is '*missing*'.

The agency first alerted to the child's absence should (together with the child's parents, if the child lives at home), decide whether the child is having an '*unauthorised absence*', or whether he/she is '*missing*'. In order to inform this judgement the agency should (together with the child's parents, as appropriate), attempt to locate the child and encourage him/her to return as quickly and safely as possible, ensuring he/she is treated positively on return.

5.2 The Social Care Risk Assessment Record

The Social Care Risk Assessment Record at Appendix 3 must be completed immediately on every occasion a child is '*missing*' (even if it has previously been completed as part of a Social Care Pre-incident Risk Assessment).

Practitioners should use their professional judgement when carrying out the risk assessment and should take into consideration any factors, which might have a bearing on the level of risk to the child or to others.

The Risk Assessment is an aid to action, and to information sharing and recording:

Aid to action: As an action tool the purpose of the Risk Assessment is to inform single and multi-agency decision-making and planning to locate a '*missing*' child. The Risk Assessment provides an indication of:

- The urgency of inquiries
- Areas of inquiry e.g. where drugs are available or that certain adults frequent, country of origin or country children are trafficked on to etc
- Type of specialist knowledge that might be needed
- The supervision that may be required
- Agencies who may be first alerted e.g. local Accident & Emergency services

Aid for information sharing and recording: At the time that a child goes '*missing*' the completed Risk Assessment should be shared with all agencies working with the child and kept on the child's file in each agency. In cases where new information becomes available and/or the child remains absent for a protracted period, the risks should be re-assessed, shared with the agencies and kept on the child's file in each agency. The most recently completed Risk Assessment should remain on the child's file in all agencies working with the child.

5.3 Notifying the Police

The Police should be notified as soon as possible (See section 7.1 below & Appendix 4), together with the information from the completed Risk Assessment. The Police will conduct an investigation into all reports of 'missing' children.

5.4 Missing Children for whom there is a Child Protection Plan⁶²

For children who have a Child Protection Plan or who are subject to a Section 47 enquiry, action additional to those for other children include:

- Informing the Local Authority Custodian of the Child Protection Register or equivalent, and the local Primary Care Trust's Designated Nurse
- Ensuring that a Strategy Meeting is arranged – as soon as practicable and in any event within 7 days, the social worker should arrange a strategy meeting if the child is still missing. Representatives from both the Police Missing Persons Unit and Child Abuse Investigation Team should attend the strategy meeting. (See Sections 5 to 8 of the London Child Protection Procedures)
- Where a child with a Protection Plan has gone missing with/without their family, Children's Social Services must implement the London Notification of Missing Children/Persons Procedure attached as *Appendix 8*

5.5 Looked After Children going Missing

Whoever discovers that a child is absent without permission from a residential unit or foster home should immediately inform the Residential Unit Manager/Shift Leader/Supervising Social Worker on duty.

The residential unit Manager/Shift Leader/Foster Carer should conduct the Risk Assessment. Where, initially, the assessment indicates that the child's circumstances are an '**unauthorised absence**', they should take all reasonable and practical steps, which a good parent would take, to secure the safe and speedy return of the child e.g. visiting addresses where the child may be or telephoning around known friends.

Children who fall within the category of '**unauthorised absence**' must be the subject of continuous risk assessment whilst they remain absent. During their absence circumstances may change and the Social Worker/Emergency Duty Team and the Residential Unit Staff/Foster Carer need to be in a position to respond accordingly.

Any unauthorised absence in excess of 48 hours should be reported to the Group Manager/Service Manager/placing Authority by the Residential Unit Manager or Supervising Social Worker.

Joint consideration should be given to adopting a finite time limit within which any child may stay in the '**unauthorised absence**' category, after which they would be deemed '**missing**'.

If there are thought to be specific issues of safety or public order difficulties involved in returning the child, then action should be agreed between the Police, the Residential Unit Staff/Foster Carer and the Social Worker/Emergency Duty Team. (If the Local Authority

⁶² Children who, prior to 2006, would have on the Child Protection Register

think they know where a looked after child is, they should actively consider approaching the courts for a Recovery Order). These circumstances would not necessarily mean the child should be categorised as '*missing*'.

5.6 Further Action

In addition to the notification of absence specified above, the following action should be taken:

- In all cases where a child is '*missing*', the child's parents should be notified
- In all cases where a child is '*missing*', a Police investigation will be initiated. Children's Social Services must convene a Strategy Meeting on the first available working day
- In high risk cases the Manager of the Residential Unit should notify the registration authority (DfES) and Social Workers should inform the Local Authority Child Protection Lead.

5.7 Monitoring

Managers of children's residential units are expected to maintain records of each occasion when a Looked After Child is identified as '*missing*' or having taken '**unauthorised absence**'. These records should be made available for inspection under the Children Act 1989. Foster Carers should record similar information. The records should include:

- The child's name and date of birth
- Date and time reported missing or absent
- A completed Social Care Social Care Risk Assessment Record (*Appendix 3*)
- Category of absence ('*missing*' or '*unauthorised*')
- Whether the Police were informed and the concerns conveyed to the Police/reasons for not informing the Police
- Whether the Social Worker was informed
- Action taken by Social Worker
- The date and time the child returned
- The outcome of the independent interview with the child on their return (*See section 9.2 below*)

6. Children who go Missing during External Activities

Children living in the community and Looked After Children participate in external activities. If a child goes missing whilst involved in an external activity, the person in charge of the activity will:

- Notify the local Police in that area (the investigation will be conducted by the missing persons unit where the child normally resides with the assistance of the unit where the child went missing)
- Notify their Manager

- Notify the child's parents and If the child is a Looked After Child, those who care for/have responsibility for the child – Residential Unit Staff/Foster Carer/
- If the child is a Looked After Child, notify the Social Worker with case work responsibility for the child, if there is one
- If the child is a Looked After Child, notify the Social Services Emergency Duty Team for any Local Authority which holds case responsibility for the child
- Look around the local area, known favourite locations as staffing levels permit

If the child is a Looked After Child the Manager of the Residential Unit and Supervising Social Worker for the Foster Carer will be responsible for ensuring the general procedures in relation to a child going missing are followed.

The person in charge of the party and the child's parents (or if he/she is a Looked After Child, the Manager of the Residential Unit and Supervising Social Worker), must decide within 24 hours of the child's absence whether to return the party of children to their parents/residential unit/foster carers. For Looked After Children, where possible, this should be done in consultation with the missing child's social worker.

Communication regarding the missing child must be maintained between all those who have been notified and the Police (where the child normally resides) (*See Appendix 7*).

7. Police Action Plans

Appropriate application of the risk assessment process by other agencies should allow the Police to be confident that all children reported to them as '*missing*' fit the agreed criteria. Referring professionals should supply the Police with a copy of the Social Care Risk Assessment Record.

Relevant agencies must provide sufficient information to the Police to enable all the risk factors to be considered. Following this a full investigation should be conducted by the Police.

Until such time as a child is no longer missing, regular liaison and communication should take place between the Police and referring/involved agencies, including the Social Worker and management of the placing Authority, for a Looked After Child.

Police are the lead agency for the investigation of missing children. If the child is a Looked After Child then Children's Social Services are responsible for children in their care at all times and this responsibility is not absolved when a child is reported missing to the Police.

7.1 Information to be Made Available

When reporting a missing child to Police (or other agencies, as appropriate), the person making the referral should complete and provide to the Police the Information Sharing Form at *Appendix 7* for a Looked After Child, and as much of the Form as possible for any other child. The minimum information should be:

- A description of the child (name, date of birth, physical appearance)
- When the child was last seen and with whom
- Family addresses

- Known acquaintances
- The basis of the risk assessment and classification of High Risk
- The name and address of the child's GP and Dentist

The Police will want to search the address at which the missing child was last seen, this should be negotiated so as to cause minimum disruption to the child's family home/residential unit/foster carer's home.

8. Communication

Should a child's absence continue, the Residential Unit Manager should make arrangements to inform all children and staff within the unit. Foster carers should talk to any other foster children they may have placed with them. For children in the community and known to local services, the agencies involved will need to decide who should be told.

The child's school should always be informed, they may have valuable information which would assist in establishing his/her whereabouts. Any such information should be passed immediately to the Police.

8.1 Informing the Press

For a child who is missing from home, the parents and the police will liaise with the child's parents about informing the press. For a Looked After Child who is missing a decision to publicise by press and/or television will be made by the Police in consultation with the Residential Unit/Foster Carer's Agency Manager, and with prior warning in order to allow the child's parents to be informed. This may be arranged at a local level, by the Borough Commander (or nominee).

8.2 Recording

If a child's absence continues beyond a few hours and falls within this Procedure, all agencies should note their discussions, decisions, actions taken and messages received/given; and the child's Social Worker (or other agreed key worker/lead professional) should keep a single agreed record on the child's file. Residential Unit Staff and Foster Carers should record the information in the daily log/diary, with a duplicate entry for the child's file (e.g. photocopies).

9. The Child's Return

9.1 Planning for the Child's Return

If a child is '*missing*' the Police and parents, Social Worker, Residential Unit Staff/Foster Carer and Police should commence contingency planning for when the child is located. Plans should include:

- Will the child return to the placement/home address?
- How will he/she be conveyed there?
- Do the Police wish to interview the child before he/she is returned to his/her placement/home address?

- Who will be an appropriate 'independent person' to talk to the child after his/her return? (See section 9.2 below)
- Children who have repeated '*unauthorised*' absences should also be offered an independent person to talk to

Normally the Residential Unit Staff/Foster Carer or Social Worker/Emergency Duty Team out of hours will make arrangements for the transportation of a child to his/her placement/home address.

The police are however not given the power to use force to take children into Police Protection. There will be occasions when a child is found in a location that may be considered unsuitable, but where there would be no legal grounds for taking them into police protection or where to do so would be unsustainable because of the child unwillingness to co-operate. In these cases police and the accountable manager from Children's Social Services will need to liaise to discuss what steps may be necessary in order to safeguard the child's welfare.

9.2 Return Interviews

Police interview: the Police will interview all children when he/she returns. The interview consists of a simple series of questions about where the child was whilst missing, where they went, what they did, who they were with etc. If the child makes an allegation of crime that occurred whilst they were missing or that contributed to him/her running away, the Police will record this allegation and take appropriate action.

Independent interview: children should be informed that they would be expected to talk about their absence to someone independent of their parents/carers on their return. The interview and the actions that following from it must:

- Identify and deal with any harm the child has incurred (his/her medical condition should be discussed immediately and any need for medical attention assessed)
- Understand and address the reasons the child ran away (the child's living arrangements/placement might need to be reviewed)
- Try to avoid it happening again

The child must receive the interview with the independent person within 72 hours of his/her return from absence:

- For Looked After Children, it is the responsibility of the residential unit Manager/Supervising Social Worker and placing Authority to ensure that this happens
- For children living in the community, the Police and Children's Social Services have responsibility for ensuring that opportunity for an independent interview is provided

The independent person could be the child's Social Worker or, for children in the community, a Duty Social Worker; other independent person's could be a Police Officer, Teacher, School Nurse, Youth or YOT Worker, or Voluntary Sector Practitioner. The child should be offered a choice.

9.3 Communication & Further Action

The child's parents/carers and all agencies informed of the absence should be advised of the child's return without delay.

Involved agencies should decide whether a Strategy Meeting is required or should be requested (*See the London Child Protection Procedures, Sections 5 to 8*).

10. Longer Absences

10.1 Strategy Meetings and keeping Cases Open

Whenever a child is missing for more than 28 days, a Strategy Meeting should be held, arranged by Children's Social Services and the Police invited (if the child has a Child Protection Plan, then officers from the Missing Persons Unit and the Child Abuse Investigation Unit or if not then the Missing Persons Unit only) (*See the London Child Protection Procedures, Sections 5 to 8*). All agencies who attend/are invited, to this meeting are responsible for ensuring that there is a clear statement of the actions being taken in respect of the child's absence and should satisfy themselves that all that should be done is being done.

For Looked After Children or those known to Children's Social Services, whilst the child remains absent, his/her case should be identified as 'open' on the Children's Social Services client database. It is recommended that a senior manager in Children's Social Services or equivalent in responsible partner agencies, should formally review all cases where children have been absent for six months or more and should satisfy him/herself on the actions taken to recover the child.

All Police missing person's files will remain 'live' until the child is located.

11. Information Sharing

Each Local Authority should have a Named Person with responsibility for Missing Children. The named person must be informed of all children who go missing and will record the details on the Children's Social Services client database.

Children's residential units should supply monthly information to the Commission for Social Care Inspection about children who have gone missing.

Partner agencies should receive information from each other on the basis of their need to know and take action.

There should be regular inter-agency meetings to monitor the implementation of this Procedure and exchange information. There should be regular reports on children who go missing to the senior management, elected members, trustees and/or governors of all partner agencies.

Appendix Four



Working together for a safer London

Statistics - Missing Persons - 01.04.05-31.03.06 (Metropolitan Police Service cases only)

Categories	2005. Total No. of cases reported where the persons 'disappeared' during 05/0	2005. Total No. of cases from previous column unsolved (at 22.04.06)
Males under 14 years	1,940	20
Males 14-17 years	4,806	42
Males aged 18 years and over	6,426	84
Females under 14 years	2,062	17
Females 14-17 years	7,329	48
Females aged 18 years and over	4,125	111
Transsexual or sex unknown	9	1
Total	26,697	323

Appendix Five

DfES Funded Community Refuge Pilot Projects

Bradford Community Refuge Project	
Provider / partnership arrangements	Bradford Social Services and Barnardo's Links into the existing Missing in Yorkshire service run by Barnardo's
Resource base	Part time co-ordinator Full time social worker Full time community resource worker in Placement Support team (links to Barnardos' sexual exploitation project) 3 crisis carers with social work support
Model	Crisis intervention only Offers a service when it has been agreed that a young person cannot return to their home base (as opposed to Missing in Yorkshire which provides a more general service to young people who have returned after a missing incident.)
Target population	Young people running away up to the age 18 Young women at risk of sexual exploitation
Services provided	Overnight up to 48 hours emergency foster care accommodation (Section 20) Day care (using trained childminders part funded by project) 'Traffic light' risk assessment Dedicated social work support -individual work Support for young women at risk of sexual exploitation
Inter-agency arrangements	Stakeholder group includes police, EDT Connexions and LAC Health team – agreement to take referrals to put young people in touch with mainstream services Offer of training to police on beat
Referrals	June – Dec 2005 7 referrals. Services provided to 5 Referrals from Nightstop, Police, SSD Those reported as missing
Marketing	Leaflets Visits to social work teams

Durham Runaways Service	
Provider / partnership arrangements	Social Care and Health Emergency and Family Support Services Connexions
Resource base	The Runaways Service is an extension to an existing emergency response team (comprising residential community support workers, EDT and a daytime team of Community Support Workers). The Runaways service adds 2 Connexions personal advisers
Model	Crisis intervention Preventative
Target population	Young people running away from home or care up to the age of 16
Services provided	24/7 freephone helpline Emergency response Message home service Links to CST and specialist services for longer term support Risk assessment Emergency accommodation Preventative work in schools
Inter-agency arrangements	Monthly multi-agency meetings Working arrangements with police, education, Connexions
Referrals	Period July 2004- August 2005 232 referrals relating to 89 young people Primarily working with repeat runaways Significant majority received between 10pm and 3am and come via EDT, the most significant referrers being residential workers and foster carers. 83% had been reported missing 2% through helpline 82% young people running away or absent from care Many referrals relate to young people who have not returned on time to their placement 16 resulted in young people being accommodated in Orchard Lane (3 bed emergency provision, Section 17)
Marketing	Proactive work in schools around personal safety and giving information about helpline Development of a range of tools to use in preventative work with young people- video, drama etc. Helpline cards entitling young people to discount fast food.

Torbay – The South Coast Runaways Initiative (SCRI)	
Provider / partnership arrangements	Children's Society project
Resource base	The project builds on the original Checkpoint project which provides casework and crisis work for 11-21 year olds. Operates <i>Missing</i> protocol, return interviews, casework and undertaking family mediation work. The DfES funding enabled the project to build physical accommodation as an emergency refuge facility (registered children's home Section 17, 20). 1 manager 1 Keyworker Sessional team 10 workers - it is not a fixed provision so overnight staff are bought in when needed.
Model	Community based and flexible refuge
Target population	10 to 18 year olds
Services provided	Early intervention Emergency accommodation Casework support Preventative work in schools Helpline
Inter-agency arrangements	Missing protocol Refuge protocol Police notifications of missing / returned Emergency protocol with Torbay Housing Department. Missing person's forum is being developed.
Referrals	Anticipates accommodating 1 young person a month <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct access • Other agencies • Parents • Police • Schools June 1005 – February 2006 4 young people accommodated Generic drop in succeeds in getting referrals from non-reported missing young people
Marketing	Targeting of young people's centres and particular groups of young people for preventative work and helpline number

The Liverpool Runaways Project	
Provider / partnership arrangements	Joint NCH / Liverpool County Council project.
Resource base	6 full time project workers operating flexible working hours until 8pm.
Model	Crisis intervention Respond to all missing reports received. Flexible approach to referrals and length of input
Target population	10 to 16 year olds running from home and care.
Services provided	Solution focussed therapy Assessment (based on ECM outcomes) and support action likely to include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family 'mediation' including boundary setting and parenting skills work • Work on sexual exploitation • Referral to the therapeutic team • Information and work on the risks of running away • LAC reviews. Drop in
Inter-agency arrangements	Information sharing protocol with police
Referrals	Police main referrers 250 in the year Only getting 'mispers'
Marketing	None as yet although leaflets and posters prepared

Leicestershire Safe4U	
Provider / partnership arrangements	Barnardo's
Resource base	10 staff running the helpline with 2 staff on call each night. One office based manager
Model	Prevention (through helpline) Crisis response
Target population	Young people running away from home The project doesn't work with looked after children.
Services provided	Out of hours helpline 5pm-12pm Call out service Follow up next day – support, 'advocacy', qualified staff will assess as 'in need' signposting
Inter-agency arrangements	There is a steering group comprised of Rutland County, Leicester City, EDT, Police, Connexions and Barnardo's. A data exchange protocol has been developed - minimal information exchange without consent except where there are CP or criminal issues. The project links through to social services through the steering group.
Referrals	Direct access Developing referral routes with police, EDT etc. Parents and professionals can also call project for advice. The project is currently developing a new direction with out of hours helpline to close. Project to undertake post event work and follow up referrals from various agencies, possible incorporating return home interviews. Worked with 30 – 35 young people in total. Few at the older end of the scale. The service has supported three 16 year olds.
Marketing	Extensive:1000 posters and 100,000 leaflets have gone out Visits to young people's venues. Website which receives 100 hits a month