

## Return to Care Interviews



Young people who go missing from care are at high risk of experiencing violence, victimisation, sexual exploitation and involvement in crime, among other things. A young person who goes missing just once can face the same immediate risks as those who go missing on a regular basis.

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Statutory guidance (Department of Education, 2014) states that, *all young people who go missing from care should be offered a 'return to care interview' within 72 hours of their return. These discussions provide the young person with appropriate support moving forward and an opportunity to uncover information that can help protect them from future risks.*

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Statistics have shown that children offer greater disclosures when return interviews are undertaken by an independent person and so Advocacy Focus offer this via our trained Independent Return to Care Advocate (RTC Advocates).

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*"One in every eight young people who have been reported missing have been physically hurt and one in nine have been sexually assaulted whilst away"*

**(Biehal et al, 2003)**

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Young people need to build up trust with a person before they will discuss in depth the reasons why they ran away. There our RTC Advocates spend time with young people to:

- *Establish why they ran away e.g. what they may be running away from or to (also known as push and pull factors)*
- *Establish what experiences they may have encountered whilst they were missing and help them to understand the risks they faced/are facing*
- *Help them stay safe and understand that they have options to prevent future instances*
- *Put them in touch with services or individuals who can support them moving forward*
- *Provide them with advice on how to stay safe should they go missing in the future e.g. helpline numbers*

Completing return to care interviews also means that professionals can share information, with the consent of the young person, to ensure an appropriate package of care is in place, identify specific areas of concern or patterns of behaviour for those who run away and highlight 'hotspots' of activity and risks in local areas.

Where young people refuse to engage with the RTC Advocate, parents and carers should be offered the opportunity to provide any relevant information of which they may be aware. This also helps to prevent further instances of the child running away and identify early the support the young person may require.

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*“One in five young people said that they had stolen, begged, or done ‘other things’ whilst they had run away in order to survive.”*

**(Rees 2011)**

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