

Effective responses to children missing from home, care and school

Learning from inspections

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Ofsted Thematic 2013

- A strategic approach to addressing the needs of missing children was less well developed
- In nearly all local authorities visited there was limited evidence of effective return interviews

Inspections 2014/16

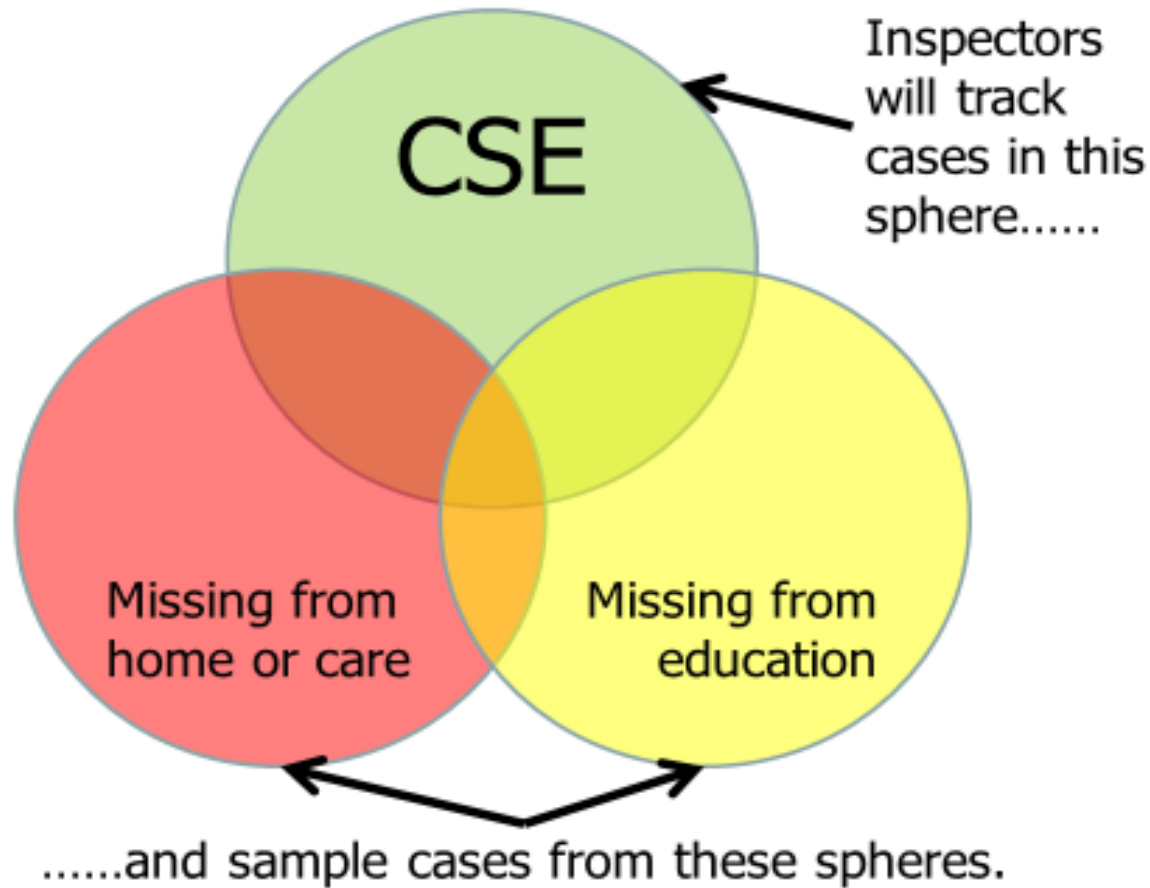
- Up to September 2016, 103 inspections of local authority services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and reviews of the Local Safeguarding Children Boards have been completed
- London boroughs- completed 22 SIF's (11 to do)
- Seven Joint Area Targeted Inspections - first six deep dives looked at child sexual exploitation and missing (Croydon & Hackney in London)
- Ofsted safeguarding intelligence groups (SIGs)
- Ofsted 2016 annual report sets out our priorities. They include: missing children, care leavers and services for disabled children.

"The staff at the children's home tried to talk to me about why I went missing. The more I went missing, the less they tried"

"The return home interviews are part of showing a young person that you are worried"

" I think foster carers should try to find you. If the child realised that their foster carer had gone looking for them, then they'd feel better. That proved to me that they didn't care. If it was their child, they'd go stalking the streets"

Deep dive inspection- Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing Children



What we know from inspection

Huge challenges facing police, local authorities and partner agencies, including:

- high numbers of children missing
- supporting children 'out of area'
- complexity in the population
- changing populations
- cross-borough working

What we know from inspection

- Many inspection reports continue to highlight deficits in responses to missing children
- Lack of robust assessment as to the risks when a child is missing
- Concerns also as to partnerships' understanding of 'push and pull' factors when children go missing
- Not all areas are sharing information effectively and considering all areas of risk, for example making the links between children missing and absent from school and the risk of child sexual exploitation

What we know from inspection

- The system of return interviews is not working well in many areas and responses when children are missing are not always robust; this is particularly an issue for children out of borough
- Senior leaders in agencies, especially the police, children's social care and the LSCB need to understand more about their population of missing children

What we know from inspection

Concerns about return interviews:

- Interviews not taking place or delays in interviewing
- The quality of return interviews is too variable
- The lack of effective recording of interviews
- Impact on the ability to use interviews to inform plans to ensure risk is reduced
- Information from return interviews not being shared, collated and analysed
- Need to learn from those places where RHI are working and hear from children about their experiences and what helped

SIF's and JTAI's – what works well

- Strategic leadership and political ownership are key
-in single agencies and across the partnership
- Understanding the cohort of children at risk
- Effective multi-agency information sharing- making the links across areas of vulnerability
- Staff who are skilled, **persistent** and well supported
- Understanding adolescent development
- Involving and engaging children and those who care for them

JTAI's and SIF inspections

- Support available for carers, parents and families of missing children
- All staff - especially front line staff - need to have the training and support to respond to missing children
- Challenge in the system- from partners, senior managers, LSCB etc.
- Mapping of risks to children across a range of domains including child sexual exploitation, gang activity, trafficking, criminal activity – to include cross-border intelligence.

Case study



Salford's response to high numbers of missing children:

- Multi agency project aims to reduce episodes of missing for those young people identified as 'high risk' and to improve the quality of return interviews
- Dedicated police and social workers available from 6am - 12 midnight
- Enables immediate response to those missing and those returned
- Work with the young person and carer to negotiate agreement about 'going out' and return times
- Positive engagement with young people that is persistent and supportive- impact is that young people begin to take responsibility for behaviour
- Approach allows for early implementation of disruption tactics.

Examples of effective practice

- Quality assurance of return interviews - reviews by senior managers of the responses to children missing, with feedback to staff and managers on practice
- Effective sharing of relevant content of information, including from return interviews, at weekly multi-agency meeting- ensures risks are known and understood in terms of individual children and young people and at a community level, and results in swift action by agencies - cross borough working
- Identification of other young people at risk from information gathered from return interviews leading to effective mapping of risk and action to address risk

Examples of effective practice

- A holistic response to children that encapsulates all their strengths and needs. JTAIs show that agencies need to work together to assess needs and then agree a sequencing of interventions with the child
- Clear multi-agency assessment to identify the 'push and pull' factors- support for family through the 'pod model' in the London Borough of Hackney provides comprehensive support to children and different family members
- Young people can and do support the development of materials to inform other young people about the risks of child sexual exploitation and missing

Examples of effective practice

- Calderdale – High Risk Register, focusing on work with schools
- South Tyneside- return to school/college interviews
- South Tyneside – Youth LSCB engagement with young people and senior managers
- Information sharing with providers- Rochdale
- Croydon good practice example identified in 'Time to Listen'