

Vulnerable Groups

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Missing Young People

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Introduction

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a type of sexual abuse. Children in exploitative situations and relationships receive something such as gifts, money or affection as a result of performing sexual activities or others performing sexual activities on them.

Children or young people may be tricked into believing they're in a loving, consensual relationship. They might be invited to parties and given drugs and alcohol. They may also be groomed online. CSE takes place all over the country including West Berkshire.

One specific risk factor associated with CSE is when a child or young person is reported missing. Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character, or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another is considered to be missing.

What do we know?

Missing Children: Between April 2016 and March 2017 there were 600 missing/absent incidents for young people aged from 10 to 17 years of age in West Berkshire, 44 of the incidents were recorded as absent. This represents an increase of 155 on the previous year. This relates to 182 different individuals which is a reduction of 7 from the previous year, indicating that there is a rise in the number of episodes of missing young people going missing more than once.

Locally and nationally the 15-to-17 year age group was the group most frequently reported as being missing with 53% being Female and 47% being male.

Last year 82% of the missing children who went missing were West Berkshire children while 18% were children who were placed or living in West Berkshire from another Local Authority area. This represents a change from last year when 92% of the missing children who went missing were West Berkshire children while 8% were children who are placed or living in West Berkshire from another Local Authority area. Of the young people going missing 15% had no previous contact with Children's Social Care, the majority of others (68%) had been known as a Child in Need with a minority (8%) through Child Protection and 14% were Looked After Children.

On the whole young people either self-return, in that the young person returned of their own volition, or they have been found by the Police and subsequently returned. It is interesting that a small proportion of those who were missing were found by a parent or carer.

There are some monthly fluctuations in numbers of missing young people, however there is not a correlation with increased missing episode and school holiday periods. The days of the week when missing occurrences are broadly similar, ranging from 14% - 16% across the week other than a Sunday when there are fewer missing instances.

The majority of missing episodes last for under 12 hours, with only a small number lasting over 24 hours. In comparison to the previous year there is a reduction in the number of young people missing for over 24 hours from 14% of the previous cohort to 5% this year.

Young people, when they went missing, tended to go to locations where they knew people and when they could meet others. The majority of places they went were public - town centre, transport hub, suburban location or park/open space.

Young people locally reported similar findings to national studies when exploring why they went missing with certain factors pushing them out of home/placement, while there were other factors that pulled them out. Seeing Friends, Family Problems, School issues, Boredom, Emotional Health Issues, Placement Issues, Seeing Boy/Girlfriend, Drug Use or Bullying.

Child Sexual Exploitation: In 2016-2017:

- 45 young people were considered by the Sexual Exploitation and Missing Risk Assessment Conference (SEMRAC), and all but two were female. 13 were not considered to be at risk of CSE
- 39 were considered to be at risk of CSE with an age range of 12-17 years.
- The proportion aged 15-17 years increased to 85% from 82% the year before.
- 24 of the 39 were considered to be at medium or high risk of CSE. They were all White British apart from one who was "White and Black/Caribbean". All were female.
- The young people lived across West Berkshire and attended the range of schools.
- All were engaged with the Children and Family Service Social Care before being referred to SEMRAC.
- 54% had been reported missing.
- 50% had had unauthorised absences prior to being referred to SEMRAC and 46% had previously had an exclusion.

- 63% had been known to CAMHs or Emotional Health Academy and 54% had self-harmed.
- 38% were known to the Youth Offending Team.
- 50% had experienced domestic abuse and 25% had a substance misusing parent. 59% had experienced neglect in their childhood.

The majority of CSE offending in West Berkshire is lone offending, often with on-line grooming. Often drugs and alcohol play a part in the abuse.

What is the data telling us?

The data tells us that a young people in residential care often go missing more frequently than those who live at home. Those who go missing three times or more are likely to continue to go missing regularly.

Young people at risk of CSE tend to be known by a range of different services and as such require a multi-agency response to keep them safe with a comprehensive strategy.

Recommendations for consideration

West Berkshire has been undertaking work with residential Children's Homes to support them in managing young people who a frequently reported missing, to safeguard them and reduce the number of missing episodes.

An analysis and audit of return home interviews has taken place to inform the response to missing children in the area and develop responses that reduce risk and address the underlying reasons they may go missing.

West Berkshire has a CSE Strategy that focuses on five key areas:

- **Strategy and Development:** to ensure that developments relating to CSE are coordinated across agencies and link with other relevant plans and strategies
- **Prevention:** to raise awareness and understanding of Child Sexual Exploitation in order to prevent children from becoming victims
- **Identification:** to ensure those at risk of CSE or being exploited are identified so we can safeguard and support them and prevent further harm
- **Support:** to ensure that victims of CSE receive the support they need at the right time, in the right way and for as long as needed to aid their recovery
- **Disruption and Prosecution:** to ensure that we work together to bring offenders to justice and disrupt their behaviour, whilst ensuring that children and young people are not subject to further risk and harm.

Other services and partner organisations

Children Social Care
Health
Education

National and local strategies

[Statutory guidance: Children who run away or go missing from home or care.](#)

[Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation](#)

Part of:

[Looked-after children, Schools, colleges and children's services](#), [Safeguarding children](#) and [Looked-after children and adoption](#)

Other chapters you might be interested in

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Adults with Autism

Adults with Disabilities in Employment

Carer

Child Protection

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller People

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Looked After Children

Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment

Referrals to Children's Social Care

Children in Need

If you have any questions about this chapter, please contact Public Health and Wellbeing Team on publichealthandwellbeing@westberks.gov.uk or 01635 503437