



Information Governance Team

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10 December 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

**Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)
Request ID: FOI663066791**

Thank you for your request for information relating to Missing children in social care.

You have requested the following information:

We are conducting a small research project to understand more about the current delivery of return interviews for children who have returned following a missing episode. Return interviews are set out in the Department for Education's 2014 statutory guidance on children who runaway or go missing from home or care. We would like to understand how they are being delivered now, and whether local authorities would recommend any changes to the guidance around them.

We are requesting data for the period between 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024. Thank you so much for your time in responding to our questions.

1. How many individual children were reported missing within your local authority?

428.

2. How many total incidents were reported of children going missing within your local authority?

1,429.

3. How many children were looked after by the local authority between 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024?

981.

4. How many individual looked after children went missing?

112.

5. How many incidents were reported of looked after children going missing?

778.

6. How many return interviews were offered to children following a missing incident?

Return home interviews were offered in 87.7% of missing incidents.

For the remainder, the child was unavailable.

7. How many return interviews were completed following a missing incident?

Return home interviews were completed for 71.7% of missing incidents. In 16.1% of cases, the interview was declined.

8. How many of these return interviews were completed within 72 hours of the child returning from the missing episode?

Return home interviews were completed within 72 hours in 61.4% of cases where a return home interview was conducted.

9. Who provides return interviews to children following a missing incident in your area?

Dedicated team or individual within the local authority – Horizon Team

Please provide any detail possible about who is delivering return interviews in your area:

- During 01/04/2023 and 31/03/2024, Coventry had an RHI 4 weekly rota, which include Youth Workers, Support Workers and Newly Qualified Social Workers

- Social Workers in the Horizon Team (Specialist exploitation team) completed RHI for children allocated to them who go missing.

- For children in care who are placed more than an one hour drive from the centre of Coventry, an independent service is procured.

10. Do you provide or commission any follow-up support for children and young people following an RHI?

No – not specific to RHIs however, actions captured may include mentoring, Early Help Support and so on.

o If yes please give details: Not applicable

11. Please tell us more about your return interview service. Would you like to see any changes in national guidance? What are the barriers to effective provision? What is working well in your area?

• The statutory timeframe, whilst understandable for ensuring children are spoken with in a timely manner, can be prohibitive in that it does not take account of missing/found circumstances; such as, children who have come to significant harm while missing and RHI needs to be a secondary consideration.

•Further guidance on who is best place to undertake RHIs would be welcomed. Anecdotal

inspectorate feedback has praised where a RHI has been undertaken by someone known to the child, but this approach is not always consistent with offering someone 'independent'.

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For information, we publish a variety of information such as: [FOI/EIR Disclosure Log](#), [Publication Scheme](#), [Facts about Coventry](#) and [Open Data](#) that you may find of useful if you are looking for information in the future.

If you are unhappy with the handling of your request, you can ask us to review our response. Requests for reviews should be submitted within 40 days of the date of receipt of our response to your original request – email: infogov@coventry.gov.uk

If you are unhappy with the outcome of our review, you can write to the Information Commissioner, who can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF or email icocasework@ico.org.uk.

Please remember to quote the reference number above in your response.

Yours faithfully

Information Governance