



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST 2023/26654

Dear Requester,

Thank you for your recent request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Section 1 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) places two duties on public authorities. Unless exemptions apply, the first duty at, **Section 1(1) (a)**, is to confirm or deny whether the information specified in a request is held. The second duty at, **Section 1 (1) (b)**, is to disclose information that has been confirmed as being held.

The information that you are seeking is in relation to the following:

REQUEST

I am currently undertaking a scoping review to find out the answer to the question: 'Why do children in residential care go missing, and where do they go whilst missing?'

I write to request any information that you have on this topic, which may include internal reports or evaluations of the following:

- Innovative practices for dealing with missing children from residential care
- Strategies used to target resources to missing children from residential care
- Spatial behaviour of children who go missing from residential care (i.e., where they go whilst missing)
- Experiences and perceptions of partnership working with children's residential care homes and how this can be (or has been) improved
- Facilitators and barriers to identifying the reasons why children go missing from residential care
- Prevention activities in relation to children who go missing from residential care
- The effectiveness of Return Home Interviews and The Philomena Protocol with children who go missing from residential care in identifying the reasons why they go missing, and where they go whilst missing



RESPONSE

- **Innovative practices for dealing with missing children from residential care**
- **Strategies used to target resources to missing children from residential care**
- **Spatial behaviour of children who go missing from residential care (i.e., where they go whilst missing)**
- **Experiences and perceptions of partnership working with children's residential care homes and how this can be (or has been) improved –**

I have reviewed the current practice within the missing children's unit in Gwent and implemented the following to improve our relationships with residential care homes and to open lines of communication: -

Gwent Residential Care Home Forum – This is a quarterly meeting which is attended by Residential Care home staff, Police and SSD.

Terms of Reference

- The group is open to All residential providers and managers from both independent and Public sector based within the Gwent Boundary.
- Meetings will take place on a quarterly basis on TEAMS
- The agenda will be open with all participants having the opportunity to bring topical issues and discussion points, with Missing, Child Exploitation and Missing reporting and responses being a standing agenda item.
- The forum will enable services to share good practice recommendations and concerns.
- All agencies/units will ensure a management representative will attend.
- The meetings will be attended where possible by a representative from the Child Exploitation team.
- All placement providers will inform the MCT of any movement of placement to ensure that NICHE is up to date. The email address is as follows: - gwentmissingchildrenteam@gwent.police.uk
- Local LPU representatives will be invited to attend when issues occur.
- There will be an input on each meeting covering topical issues or themes that are emerging in Gwent.



The meeting is recorded on TEAMS for each forum. Minutes will be taken and shared with the group. Specific children and young people's identity will be anonymised.

We have allocated a Single point of contact to every care home. We utilise PCSO'S to carry out this action. The expectations are as follows: -

- You will be a single point of contact covering the specific allocated Residential Care Home, they will be provided with your works telephone number and email address
 - The home will be visited once a month to provide a visible presence to the children and staff
 - During the visit, the homes are to inform you about any changes with regards to children moving in or out of the premises. This is to be documented and fed back to the missing person team via email GwentMissingChildrenTeam@gwent.police.uk The homes will be expected to provide you with all the details that they have provided previously for the other children (They have all had a spreadsheet and are aware of the questions asked)
 - Any children identified by the home as being at risk of, or being, exploited either criminally (Child Criminal Exploitation - CCE) or sexually (Child Sexual Exploitation - CSE), ensure appropriate action is taken to reduce the risk of that child being, or continuing to be, exploited by notifying the missing person team and submission of a PPN.
 - You will build a rapport with the children (and their carers) during your visit, as a trusted professional, gather information to identify any perpetrator(s) who may be exploiting them, or locations where the exploitation of children may be taking place, and work with the missing person team and partner agencies to ensure that child, and any others who may be at risk, are safeguarded. You would be intelligence led, and submit timely intelligence submissions yourselves.
 - You will be expected to attend the Quarterly Residential Care Home Forum to feed in any concerns or information relevant to the Care Home allocated to you
- Facilitators and barriers to identifying the reasons why children go missing from residential care**

Children in residential care tend to be distrusting of Police and don't always engage. Children are reluctant to share their whereabouts or who they have been with as they don't want Police to attend the location or speak to named people.

- **Prevention activities in relation to children who go missing from residential care**
- **The effectiveness of Return Home Interviews and The Philomena Protocol with children who go missing from residential care in identifying the reasons why they go missing, and where they go whilst missing**

Gwent Police do not currently use the Philomena Protocol



The return home interviews are affective. However, more information and intelligence tends to be gleaned from the Debrief which is carried out by an independent party i.e education, prevention services.

Freedom of Information Act is a public disclosure regime, not a private regime. Any information disclosed under the Act is thereafter deemed to be in the public domain, and therefore freely available to the public and will be published on the Gwent Police website.

If, upon receiving a response to a freedom of information request, you are unhappy with the outcome, you may request an internal review. **This should be made within 40 working days of the initial response.**

Please note, any written reply from an applicant expressing dissatisfaction with an authority's response to a request for any information will be treated as a complaint and will automatically lead to an internal review.

Thank you for your interest in Gwent Police.