

PREVENT A YOUNG PERSON GOING MISSING SPOT THE SIGNS



Every 3 minutes a child runs away from home or care and each year 100,000 children go missing in the UK. These children are at risk of sexual exploitation, involvement in crime, substance misuse and homelessness. But many children show signs long before they leave, and it is possible to spot these signs and act.

WHAT SHOULD I LOOK OUT FOR?

- 1 Changes in a child's behaviour or how they present themselves.** Are they outgoing, but have become shy? Have they started dressing or presenting very differently?
- 2 Becoming secretive or withdrawn.** Is a usually friendly child suddenly hiding their activity?
- 3 Evidence that they are subject to physical or emotional abuse**
- 4 Changes to their regular friendship group.** Are they hanging out with a different crowd?
- 5 Isolation from friends – or signs that they are isolating themselves.** Are they moving themselves away from friends they've known for a long time?
- 6 A breakdown in relationships at home and/or school**
- 7 Signs of mental health problems and emotional wellbeing problems**
- 8 Non-compliance to boundaries.** Is a previously well behaved child suddenly ignoring boundaries?

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WHAT SHOULD I DO?

1. Make sure that the responsible adults in their life understand your concerns.
2. Keep open your lines of communication. Try to remain calm and collected with the child, rather than getting angry.
3. Talk to them about the risks associated with going missing, and ensure that they know where they can access independent support (see below).
4. Ensure they have their phone charged and have credit so are contactable and can contact someone for support.

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT/ADVICE

Alert a professional if you have any concerns. Catch22 have missing services in locations around the UK, visit our website to find out if there's one near you. If there isn't, contact your local children's social care team. Whether your concern seems small or large, they will be able to direct you to a local support service.