

British and Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children in the Care of The Local Authority Who go Missing

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ABSTRACT

This thesis plans to add to the limited research into the increasing problem of children under the care of the local authority in United Kingdom running away and/or being reported missing. Specifically, to understand the factors that increase the likelihood of this sample group going missing. Whether this group of children, which can also include Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) are heterogeneous or homogeneous in their characteristics, and the differences if found to be heterogeneous. To explore validated risk assessments in use, and to see whether current governmental statutes are being followed with regards to missing and/or runaway children under the care of the local authority.

A systematic review was conducted with the aim of ascertaining the characteristics present in local authority children who go missing. This was to better inform services where interventions should be focused. 14 studies were included in this review and it was found that the characteristics that appeared to predict runaway behaviour in Looked After Children (LAC) included: older age, being female, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), trauma, placement instability and/or type and mental illness amongst others. A critique of the Adolescent Concerns Evaluation (ACE) assessment is then presented. The reason for this critique is that before the development of new risk assessments to predict runaway behaviours in LAC can take place, older validated assessments need to be evaluated. The Adolescent Concerns Evaluation proved a versatile and easy to use tool, due to the different factors which capture many aspects of a child's life (peers, family, school etc). Unfortunately, whilst the ACE had reliability and validity testing, research did not finish due to economic viability which has left questions about normative data and concurrent validity, these questions impacted the usability of the tool in practice.

This is followed by three studies, beginning with a pilot study looking at whether there was a difference between British LAC and UASC who were reported missing (N=107). The pilot study investigated police responses to runaway behaviour, characteristic differences, and predicting who was most at risk of running away. The pilot study found there were significant differences between British LAC and UASC who were reported missing. If a screening tool was developed to ascertain whether a young person was at risk of running away, there would need to be a one for each sample.

The primary aim in the research study was to identify the factors associated with increased runaway behaviour within a sample of 210 LAC runaways in England between 2017 and 2018. Correlational relationships were found between older children, being Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET), having more total placements, experiencing mental illness, alcohol difficulties, being at risk of trafficking and increased runaway incidences. The study also had a small sample (n= 13) of UASC who were qualitatively analysed.

The secondary aims in the research study aimed to identify whether return interviews were being conducted following statutory regulations and procedures for safeguarding. In addition, a study objective was to identify if there were any factors contributing to the successful completion of a return to care interview following a runaway episode, in the same sample of 210 runaway Looked After Children. This included the length of time the runaway was missing and the reason the runaway went missing. The study found that return interviews only took place in 43.2% of the total 1016 runaway episodes related to the 210 LAC. Positively, in the cases where return interviews were taking place, these were within 72 hours in 78.1% of total runaway incidents. Furthermore, in the cases where the young person was taken into care due to challenging behaviour or risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), they

were more likely to receive a return interview. Similar to the pilot study, there was not enough data on the UASC sample (n=13) to quantitatively analyse the results. However, in summary, return interviews were conducted on only six occasions, and four of those occasions were within 72 hours.

Overall, this thesis adds further evidence that children under the care of the local authority are a heterogenous group. Specifically, the needs of runaway and/or missing UASC do not have the same needs as local children under the care of the local authority. Further research is required into the risk factors for identifying children at risk of running away and/or being reported as missing, as some risks may be context dependant. Validated risk assessments for runaway children are limited and poor, suggesting that more reliable and valid tools need to be developed. Serious consideration needs to be given towards replacing or improving current governmental guidelines to reflect the changes to the increasing rates of children going missing. Furthermore, more scrutiny needs to be given towards police and public services keeping records and protecting vulnerable children who are at risk of running away.

In conclusion from a Forensic Psychology perspective. Children in the care of local authority care going missing is a problem not only because many come from adverse backgrounds of trauma in which they are either the victim or the perpetrator of crime. The added element of going missing means that young people in care are more likely to be forced into gangs, prostitution and/or substance misuse in order to survive due to the lack of support many of their typical peers have. This further perpetuates the cycle of being a victim or heading into the forensic pathway where they come into forensic services.

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CONTENTS

British and Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children In The Care of The Local Authority Who Go Missing	**Page**
ABSTRACT	**2**
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	**5**
CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION	**13**
The Problem with Child Runaways Research	14
The Scale of the Problem	14
Why Children Runaway	15
Consequences of Running Away	16
Why Research Local Authority Runaways?	16
Thesis Aims	17
Structure of Thesis	18
CHAPTER TWO – SYSTEMATIC REVIEW	**20**
Abstract	21
Introduction	22
Previous systematic reviews	23
Objectives	24
Methods	24
Main Findings	42
Discussion	50
Implications	52
Limitations	52

Future Research	53
Conclusion	54
CHAPTER THREE – PSYCHOMETRIC CRITQUE	**55**
Abstract	56
Introduction	57
The NAR	58
The ACE	62
Reliability	65
Validity	67
Training and Supervision	71
Administration and Scoring	72
Conclusions	73
CHAPTER FOUR - PILOT STUDY	**74**
Abstract	75
Introduction	76
Aim	78
Method	79
Results	81
Practical Implications	96
Discussion	99
Conclusion	104
CHAPTER FIVE – EMPIRICAL STUDY	**106**
Abstract	107
Background	108

Method	114
Results	116
Discussion	133
Limitations	141
Practical and ethical implications	143
Conclusions	144
CHAPTER SIX – DISCUSSION	**147**
Summary of Thesis	148
Previous Literature	149
Process of Running away in LAC	151
Practical Implications	153
Strengths	155
Recommendations	156
Limitations	158
Future Research	159
Final Conclusion	160
REFERENCES	**162**
APPENDICES	**175**

TABLE OF APPENDICES

Appendices	Page
Appendix A – PECO	175
Appendix B – Study Quality Check	177
Appendix C – Modified Cochrane Collaboration Bias Assessment Tool	178
Appendix D – Data extraction tool	181

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 2.1. Systematic review – Summary of Reviewed Studies	29
Table 2.2. Systematic review – Quality assessment table	35
Table 2.3. Systematic Review – prevalence of male and female runaways	45
Table 2.4. Systematic review – risk factors associated with runaway looked after children	48
Table 4.1. Pilot Study - Demographic information on the Sample	82
Table 4.2. Pilot Study - Characteristic Information on Sample	83
Table 4.3. Pilot Study - Runaway information on sample	85
Table 4.4. Pilot Study - Demographics and Characteristics of LAC and UASC in relation to running away (N= 107).	86
Table 4.5. Pilot Study - How Runaway LAC and UASC Return	93
Table 4.6. Pilot Study – British Looked after Children Binary Logistic Regression N=49.	94
Table 4.7. Pilot Study - Classification of British Looked after Children Cases	94
Table 4.8. Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children Binary Logistic Regression N=57.	95
Table 4.9. Pilot Study - Classification of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children Cases	96
Table 4.10. Pilot Study - risk factor significance within regression model and screening tool minimum and maximum score weighting LAC Sample	96

Table 4.11. Pilot Study - The total score participants received on the screening tool and whether or not they ran away.	97
Table 4.12. Pilot Study - risk factor significance within regression model and screening tool minimum and maximum score weighting UASC Sample	97
Table 4.13. Pilot Study The total score participants received on the screening tool and whether or not they ran away.	98
Table 5.1. Empirical Study - Descriptive Characteristics of Runaway Episodes (N=1016)	116
Table 5.2. Empirical Study - Care information of Adolescent Participants (N=209)	118
Table 5.3. Empirical Study - Care information of Adolescent Participants (N=209)	120
Table 5.4. Empirical Study -Descriptive Characteristics of Runaway Episodes (N=1016)	121
Table 5.5. Empirical Study - Descriptive Characteristics of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (N=13)	123
Table 5.6. Empirical Study - Descriptive Characteristics of Return Interviews (N=439)	132

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 2.1 Systematic Review – How the articles were sorted	27
Figure 5.1: Empirical study - Age and Runaway Incidents	125
Figure 5.2: Empirical study – Placement type and runaway incidents	126
Figure 5.3: Empirical study – total placements and runaway incidents	126
Figure 5.4: Empirical study – was a return interview conducted based on how many hours missing.	128
Figure 5.5: Empirical study – was a return interview conducted depending on reason of running	129
Figure 5.6: Empirical study – was a return interview conducted depending on reason known/unknown	130
Figure 5.7: Empirical study – reason for taken into care impacting whether a child has a return interview	131
Figure 6.1: Proposed Runaway Process	152
Figure 6.2: Applied Runaway Process	153

CHAPTER ONE

BRITISH AND UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM-SEEKING CHILDREN IN THE CARE OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY WHO GO MISSING: AN INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The problem with child runaway research

There are many problems researching missing or runaway children, simply starting with conceptualising the concept. The terms 'missing' and 'runaway' are multi-faceted and often operationalised in different ways, which makes replicating research difficult (Sedlack, Finkelhor, Hammer and Schultz, 2002). Hammer, Finkelhor and Sedlack (2002) define missing as "youth whose caretakers have reported them to authorities in order to help locate them"; they define runaways as "a child who leaves home without permission and stays away". Further, Zide and Cherry (1993) have long suggested the initial runaway subgroups that we can see in literature today: 'forsaken' runaways, now known as 'homeless' children; 'thrown out' runaways, now known as 'throw away' children. Then there are 'running to' and 'running from' runaways. 'Running to' runaways are more likely to have repeat incidences of running away, a relationship with family members, be older in age, more committed to schooling; and higher functioning, where they can use resources and support systems during runaway incidents. 'Running from' runaways were more likely to have poor family attachments, a poor level of functioning, experience difficulty at school and more likely to have experienced abuse or neglect. In many cases they had higher levels of substance misuse, criminality and prostitution. These extending typologies demonstrate the heterogeneity of child runaways and highlight the difficulty in developing programmes for reducing runaway behaviours (Edelbrock, 1980), because the needs of each typology differ so much, and the services need to be robust enough to cater for all (Jones, 1988).

The Scale of The Problem

One in nine children run away from home or local authority care before their 16th birthday within the United Kingdom (Hill, Taylor, Richards and Reddington, 2016). In any year there are approximately 360 000 reports of missing people amounting to an estimated 200 000 actual missing people (The Home Office, 2011). Furthermore, an estimated 60% of the total number of actual missing people are made up of young people in the age range of 0 – 18; and approximately 35% of that figure are children running away from local authority care (The National Crime Agency UK Missing Persons Bureau, 2016). Between 2003 and 2008 the government paid out £500 million to support missing person cases (Missing Persons Bureau, 2010, as cited by The Home Office, 2011). Inquiries into missing local authority children from 2019, have noted that there has been a significant increase in children in care running away (Institute for Government, 2019), and while has there been some progressive increases in financial resources since the budget cuts, these have been insufficient as the demand on those resources are increasing quicker than supply, considering years of debt from the budget cuts (Turner, 2019). In short, this means that numbers of runaway children, particularly children under the care of the local authority are likely to continue rising; and public services will continue to struggle to meet the demand.

Why Children Runaway?

Most children run away from home due to family difficulty, abuse and/or neglect (Hill et al, 2016), substance misuse or domestic violence (Roe, 2000). The Railway Children Charity (2019) also highlight, mental health difficulty, bullying, loneliness, relationship difficulties not related to the family or schooling conflict. It is important to understand that a child could run away for any reason, but the risks they face out of the place they left, may be greater.

Consequences of Running Away

Burgess (1986) historically discussed that there are some children who run away that can return home, and resolve their difficulties, or adapt to an acceptable way of moving forward. Others' trapped in this cycle, however, are susceptible to those who would exploit their need to survive using county-lines, pornography, prostitution, abuse etc. to trade shelter and sustenance. At a cognitive level, Martinez (2006) highlighted that those with prior runaway behaviour have poor conflict resolution and poor coping strategies.

Why Research local authority Runaways?

So why should we look at Local Authority runaways? As it will be mentioned repeatedly throughout this thesis, and as it has been highlighted in this introduction children in care are three times more likely to be reported missing than children not in the care of the local authority (Rees and Lee, 2005). Children in the care of the local authority who go missing face significant risks such as grooming, sexual exploitation, criminality, victimisation, substance misuse, sleeping rough and more adverse experiences (Missing People, 2015). Funding for children's services is lacking, and research to find more cost-efficient ways to reduce risk are vital. Finally, there are governmental policies in place to support these vulnerable children, and yet they are not being followed. Research to highlight gaps and failings, is the only way to ensure that things will change for the future to better outcomes. This can be considered a forensic psychology issue as LAC are a disadvantaged heterogenous sample of whom there is a large proportion of both victims and perpetrators. We have already discussed that children in care who go missing are more likely to experience victimization, grooming and sexual exploitation (Missing People, 2015). Young people on the street are also more likely to be exploited for prostitution in order to survive if they have

nowhere else they feel they can go. This can also be considered a forensic issue from a victim and criminality perspective. For young people coerced into a lifestyle of substance misuse, gangs and criminality in order to fund life on the streets as a consequence of running away, this has an impact on the forensic psychology pathway in terms of ending up in the prison service, in psychiatric hospitals, in rehabilitation centres. Forensic psychologists have specialist knowledge of risk assessment and models, and therefore it is important that knowledge is used to risk assess how to reduce runaway rates and/or identify those at risk; therefore, leading to earlier intervention, and reducing the strain on services. This is crucial, as in many cases those in forensic services have difficulties spanning from limited intervention in childhood.

Thesis Aims

The aim of this thesis is to add to the limited research into the increasing problem of children under the care of the local authority in United Kingdom, including UASC, who run away and/or are reported missing. Specifically, to understand the factors that increase likelihood of this sample group going missing, and whether this group of children which are heterogeneous or homogeneous in their characteristics and the differences if heterogeneous, to explore validated risk assessments in use, and to see whether current governmental statutes are being followed with regards to missing and/or runaway children under the care of the local authority. Hence, the thesis aims to add to the current limited literature about missing looked after children by investigating the following research questions:

- Are missing Looked After Children (LAC) are a heterogeneous group in terms of their characteristics. Specifically, when considering Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)?
- What risk factors are associated with missing Looked After Children (LAC)?

- What the risk factors may increase the likelihood of Looked After Children (LAC) going missing?
- To evaluate which validated risk assessments currently exist to assess children at risk of running away.
- Are current governmental policies with regards to runaway and/or missing local authority children being followed? Particularly, with respects to police return interviews and record keeping.

Structure of the Thesis

Following this introduction to the topic area (Chapter 1), A systematic review is presented in Chapter 2, which aims to ascertain the characteristics present in local authority children who go missing to better inform services where interventions should be focused. Chapter 3 critically evaluates the Adolescent Concerns Evaluation (ACE) assessment to look at ways to develop of more reliable and valid assessments to predict the risk of running away in LAC.

Chapter 4 describes a pilot study that looked at whether there was a difference when British LAC and UASC were reported missing. The pilot study investigates police responses to runaway behaviour, characteristic differences, and predicting who was most at risk of running away.

The primary aims of the research study reported in Chapter 5, aim to identify the factors associated with increased runaway behaviour within a sample of 210 LAC runaways in England between 2017 and 2018. The study also had a small sample (n= 13) of UASC who

were qualitatively analysed. The secondary aims reported in Chapter 5 aimed to identify whether return interviews were being conducted following statutory regulations and procedures for safeguarding. In addition, a study objective was to identify if there were any factors contributing to the successful completion of a return to care interview following a runaway episode, there was a focus on the 1016 runaway episodes recorded involving the 210 LAC runaways. This included the length of time the runaway was missing and the reason the LAC went missing.

Chapter 6 presents a discussion of the primary and secondary research studies reported in the thesis, describing the strengths and limitations of the research and the practice implications. Some further lines of research are proposed.

CHAPTER TWO

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN WHO RUN AWAY FROM LOCAL AUTHORITY CARE: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW?

What are the Characteristics of children who run away from Local Authority Care: A Systematic Review?

Abstract

The Office for National Statistics data suggests that the issue of runaway children, and specifically runaway children under the care of the local authority is increasing as the years go on, and governmental funding for services are further cut. The objective of this review is to ascertain the characteristics present in local authority children who go missing to better inform services where interventions should be focused. Electronic searches yielded 5167 results and following the application of inclusion criteria and quality assessment, 14 articles were included in the review. Characteristics that appeared to predict runaway behaviour in LAC included: older age, being female, adverse childhood experiences, trauma, placement instability and/or type and mental illness. The pragmatic use of this information may reduce runaway behaviour and thus the strain on declining services.

What are the Characteristics of children who run away from Local Authority Care: A Systematic Review?

Researching runaways can be particularly difficult not least because the term takes many forms and has many meanings. Running away according to the Collins Concise English Dictionary is the act of 'taking flight, escaping, going away or departing, and to be reported missing is to 'be not present, absent or lost, unable to be traced, not known to be dead,' with so many different definitions at this base level it is not surprising that when attempting to label people who are not where they should be, people can fall through the cracks due to a confusion on how exactly to label them. Nevertheless, it is important to investigate the reasons behind people being reported missing or absent as it is resource intensive, financially draining and numerically prevalent. For example, within the UK There are approximately 360 000 reports of missing people per annum amounting to an estimated 200 000 actual missing people (The Home Office, 2011). This costs the UK government an estimate of £1 000 per person. Between 2003 and 2008 the government paid out £500 million to support missing person cases (Missing Persons Bureau, 2010, as cited by The Home Office, 2011). Furthermore, in any year an estimated 60% of the total number of actual missing people are made up of young people in the age range of 0 – 18.

Running away is specifically a problem within vulnerable populations such as LAC because they are up to three times more likely to be reported missing than children not in the care of the local authority (Rees and Lee, 2005) furthermore, this figure does not take into account the LAC that are not reported missing due to organisational policy or individual care plans. In the UK LAC going missing is a problem that is steadily increasing from year to year. Similarly, in the US, earlier this year the Washington Post reported that 1500 unaccompanied migrant children had gone missing, 61,000 foster children had been listed as

missing since 2000 and an additional 53,000 were listed as runaways (Denfeld, 2018). Children in the care of the local authority who go missing face significant risks such as grooming, sexual exploitation, criminality, victimisation, substance misuse, sleeping rough and more adverse experiences (Missing People, 2015)

What is already known about children in local authority care who go missing is that they are a heterogenous group, however the extent of that heterogeneity is still being explored due to the mix of children classed under the umbrella term LAC, or children in the care of the local authority. Most youths that run away from care are aged 12 years or older and/or end up involved in criminality (Finkelstein, Wamsley, Currie & Miranda, 2004) gender is often debated with females seemingly felt to be more likely to runaway than males (Courtney & Zinn, 2009). Young people of ethnical minorities are often overrepresented in social services and runaway studies, although when controlled this effect is not always seen (Padilla & Summers, 2011). Number of prior placements is also a factor with a strong association to running away (Kort-Butler, Tyler & Melander, 2011). Whilst many other factors are debated, the effects are not always strong or in agreement which begs the question that research questions are not robust enough to pick up sensitive results.

Previous systematic reviews

There have been previous literature and systematic reviews looking into the runaway behaviour of children, particularly the characteristics of such children. However, searching the Cochrane Library and the Campbell Collection found no systematic reviews specifically looking into the runaway behaviour of children in the care of the local authority. Considering the scope of the problem as highlighted in the introduction there is clearly a gap in the literature for such work.

Objectives

The aim of this systematic review is to ascertain which characteristics are present in local authority children who go missing, therefore, to have an idea of the characteristics that increase the likelihood of such children running away. This would then better inform services on where interventions should be focused to reduce runaway behaviour in future.

Methods

Appendix A to D can be referred to in order to reference the design used to select studies for review and check how studies were assessed for quality prior to being included for the review. The systematic review did not constrain date, language or country of study to get as much data as possible and to hope that the conclusion could later be generalised as far as possible. The following section will go into further detail on the inclusion criteria, search methods, data collection and how the initial data was assessed for risk bias.

Inclusion (PECO)

Study Typology: Published and non-published grey literature were considered particularly: cohort, case control, analytical cross-sectional studies and experimental designs such as Randomised Control Trials (RCTS) and Non- Randomised Control Trials (Non-RCTS) were included in the search for appropriate literature. The following types of studies were part of the exclusion criteria: viewpoints, reviews, case studies, purely qualitative studies and purely descriptive cross-sectional studies. In the cases where the study question was not looking at runaway behaviour as a primary outcome, then the study was also excluded. Country was only be part of the exclusion criteria if the definition of child under the care of the local

authority differed from the one outlined in the Population inclusion criteria (See Appendix A).

Population: The sample were children under the age of 18 in the care of the local authority. If the sample were mixed age or also included an adult sample, then there needed to be a clear distinction in the study for the study to be included in the review. Being under the care of the Local authority included: Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC), Foster Care, Independent Supported Accommodation (ISA), children in secure settings or residential homes.

Exposure: The exposure is any characteristic that is related to the outcome behaviour, for example substance misuse, abuse or gender.

Comparator: This was children under the age of 18 in the care of the local authority that were not exposed to the characteristic (i.e. abuse, substance misuse, trauma, bullying, etc.) expected to be related to the Outcome (running away).

Outcome: These were the children under 18 who had been reported to have 'run away', 'absconded', or been reported as 'missing' or 'absent'. Children believed to have been 'abducted', 'kidnapped' or 'trafficked' will be excluded. 'homeless' children were also excluded, children 'at risk' but still under parental care were also excluded.

Search methods

The following databases were searched: The Campbell Collaboration, The Cochrane Library, Open Grey, PsycInfo using the OVID interface, ASSIA; NCJRS, ERIC, ProQuest

Dissertations, Theses AI, MEDLINE using the OVID interface, Web of Science, Community Care; PsycArticles using the OVID interface, SCOPUS using the Elsevier interface, Social Care Online and Social Care Institute for Excellence. The same keyword searches were used in each database, although minor changes were made according to each database search coding.

("missing child*" OR "missing person" OR "missing teen*" OR "runaway behav* OR runaway* OR "runaway youth*" OR "runaway adolescen*" OR "runaway child*" OR "runaway teen*" OR "absent person" OR "absent child*" OR "abscond*") AND ("local authority" OR "foster care*" OR "residential home*" OR "supported accommodation" OR "looked after child*" OR "in care" OR "UASC" OR "LAC" OR "Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child*") AND ("risk factor*" OR "risky behavior?r" OR "demographic characteristic*" OR "family background*" OR "causes" OR "correlate*" OR "precursor*" OR "predict*" OR "background characteristic*" OR "personal characteristic*" OR "family characteristic*").

Data collection and analysis

All the references found during the search were imported into the EndNote desktop app (n= 5167), there appeared to be some issues with the search criteria that caused such a large return in references, despite some clearly not being relevant. When attempting to fix the searching algorithm the search returns got larger rather than smaller, therefore the original search terms above were used and this number was used. Duplicates were removed using EndNote's duplicate removal tool (n = 847), book chapters were removed (n = 31), during an initial screen of the remaining articles those that were clearly not related to the systematic review question were removed (n = 3497). The remaining 823 abstracts were read to see if they matched or possibly matched the PECO and those that clearly did not were removed (n

= 729). This left the remaining 94 articles to assess. After applying the full PECO to the 94 remaining articles 14 papers remained. 80 studies were removed for the following reasons: 10 studies were unavailable despite attempts with the authors and attempting the interlibrary loan system, and 70 studies did not meet the full PECO either due to the outcomes not being specific, the population not being distinct or lack of operationalising local authority care. Due to the scale of the removed papers, the 84 papers were sent to a colleague to also run through the PECO and the same 14 papers were returned (100% agreement). See Figure 2.1 for a breakdown of paper attainment. To see how the papers were coded for quality please see Appendix B.

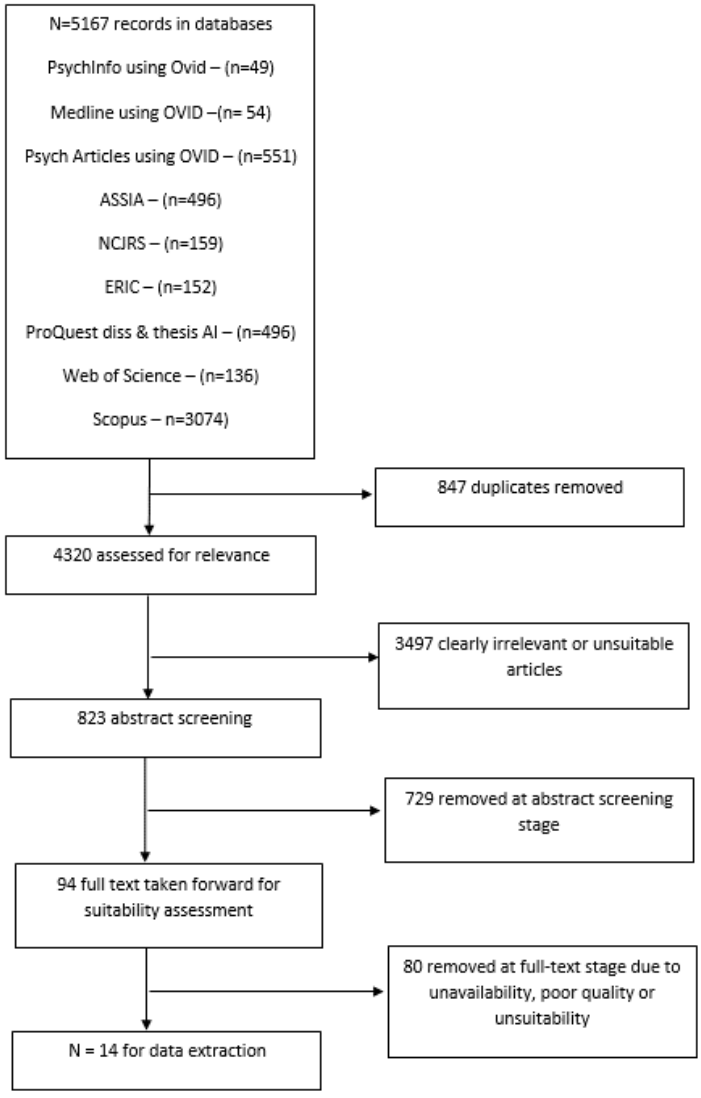


Figure 2.1. how the articles were sorted

Assessment of risk bias

Using the modified Cochrane Collaboration tool, the remaining 14 studies were assessed for risk of bias. Appendix C highlights a blank version of this modified tool. Due to the nature of the studies as will be discussed further in the results section, a table for the risk of bias is the included.

Data Extraction

Following the data collection and assessment of risk bias stages, the relevant data was extracted using the Data extraction form Appendix D, the use of this form for each study ensured that it was easier to synthesize the data and discuss results.

Results

This section will discuss the results from the systematic review, such as the characteristics and quality of the 14 included papers and a comparison of the results.

Characteristics of included studies

The characteristics of the included 14 papers can be seen summarised in Table 2.1. As seen in the table, each study has been given an identifier and for convenience, going forward each study will be referred to by this number. Most of the papers have similarities in terms of study design, however they differ in terms of sample, despite the restricted population sample outlined in the PECO. The aims of the studies also show diversity, although they all generally want to ascertain characteristics of runaway behaviour in some form. For example: Foster Care (n=4), Residential Care (n=4), inpatient treatment hospital (n=1) and a mix of the two (n=5), Despite the initial full papers having a range of countries included, the final studies

contained ones from The US (n=12) or The UK (n=2). Most studies (n=11) are second analysis cross sectional studies, whereby the researchers rely on organisational, or governmental data to run their analyses rather than first-hand studies with participants. The remaining studies (n=3) also employ this study design but also conduct interviews or surveys for further analysis.

Table 2.1.
Summary of Reviewed Studies (N=14)

ID	Author, location Study design	Population and sample size	Source of data	Main Findings	Predictors of runaway behaviour
1	Fasulo et al (2002) United States Cross-Sectional	147 children: 79 girls 68 boys all under 18.	- Foster care	- Sexual abuse not related to runaway behaviour - Ethnicity not related to runaway behaviour - Psychotherapy reduced risk of running away - Length of stay did not demonstrate a relationship with running (results ambiguous) - Sexual abuse was not associated -	- Females more likely to runaway - 16yr olds more likely to permanently runaway within their age group - Children who received less therapy more likely to runaway – psychotherapy specific
2	Thompson et al (2006) United States Cross-Sectional	15531 children: 9660 girls 5871 boys aged between 12 – 18	- Foster care - Inpatient - Residential Care home - Independent living	- Significant differences between recurrent runaways and isolated event runaways - youths who were employed were less likely to run away multiple times.	- Females more likely to runaway - having a poor relationship with their mother - being physically or sexually abused - having relationship difficulties with a foster parent - having been expelled - from school - having poor grades - having been - charged with a misdemeanour - being involved in a gang.

					- having suicidal thoughts or - behaviours - abusing substances. - engaging in survival sex or prostitution - that mothers who were employed increased the odds of multiple runaway episodes - youths living primarily outside their parents' home - psychological dysfunction
3	Lin (2012) United States Cross-Sectional	392999 in total 207503 boys 185496 girls, 8047 runaways 384952 non-runaways. Foster care	- Foster care	- There are more males in foster care than females - There are more white children in foster care - Children who did not run away tended to have been in their foster placements longer - Black children form a disproportionate percentage amongst runaways - The most important prevention is to stabilise foster placements	- Runaway foster children are older than foster children who did not runaway - Females are more likely to runaway within foster care - Black children were more likely to runaway than any other ethnicity, - Hispanic children had a higher percentage in the runaway group than non-runaway group - Children that ran away from their foster care were approximately five years older at first removal - Runaways were more likely to have experienced placement instability - Children with behavioural problems were more likely to runaway - Children who had experienced neglect were more likely to runaway

					- Children that had a caretaker unable to look after them were likely to runaway - Children from a single parent household were more likely to runaway - Children with a physical disability or mental disability were more likely to runaway
4	McIntosh et al (2010) United States Cross-Sectional	667 in total 400 boys 267 girls	Residential care	- Youth may be less likely to run away when their elopement is inhibited by their clinical need or functional impairment	- Substance misuse - Delinquency - School attendance - History of running away/runaway ideation - Age
5	Eisengart et al (2007) United States Cross-Sectional	2114 in total 758 girls 1359 boys	- Residential Care	- youth who were discharged due to runaway were different from some youth discharged for other reasons on each of the CFARS items - In addition to Medical/Physical, the only item on which youth who ran away did not differ from any other discharge reason was Traumatic Stress - youth who were discharged due to runaway were less symptomatic than youth who were discharged for other reasons	- Older youths are more likely to run away from residential care - Females are more likely to runaway than males - Substance misuse increase likelihood - Trauma was not a predictor - Symptom severity increase likelihood - Socio legal problems increase likelihood
6	Biehal et al (2000) United Kingdom Mixed methods	Survey of 210 young people Interviews with 36 young people	- Residential Care home and foster care	- 53% of the missing sample went to see friends and family - Those in the ‘seeing friends	- Older females were just as likely to go missing as males - Females that went missing were more

		14 focus groups Data from 2227 incidents of (272 young people) Aged between 11 – 16		and family group' were older and were missing longer. They also tended to return voluntarily and were less likely to commit offences - Older runaways were more likely to go in groups, be missing for shorter length of time sleep rough or be involved in crime. -	likely to be drawn into prostitution - Males with emotional and behavioural difficulties were more likely to go missing - Runaways were more likely to have placement instability - Runaways were also more likely to misuse substances and no attend school
7	Nesmith (2006) United States Cross-Sectional	352, 9 cases removed 139 girls 204 boys Aged between 11 – 18 Foster care	- Foster Care	- Black children were not more likely to runaway - External CBCL score predicted runaway - Social work assessments of foster parents helped to predict running away with higher scores predicting a lower hazard of running away.	- Native Americans were more likely to runaway - The older a youth the more likely they were to run away - A history of running away increases the chances - A child with any other plan than family reunification was more likely to run away
8	Courtney et al (2009) United States Cross Sectional	14,282 children and youth 7326 girls 6953 boys Running from care Aged 18 and under	- foster care	- Cognitive delay or developmental disability decreased likelihood of first run - Schizophrenia and psychosis decreased risk - most youth who run away from care are not only older adolescents when they run, but they also entered care during their adolescence.	- Girls were more likely to run than boys and more likely to run more than once - Black and Hispanic children were more likely to run - Adolescents who run are older - Lack of supervision increased likelihood of run - Diagnosed mental and behavioural problems increased first run - Substance use increased runaway risk

				- Sexual abuse decreased likelihood of first run -	- Placement instability increased risk - Previous runaway history increases risk
9	Sarri et al (2016) United States Cross Sectional	371 runaway sample 371 non-runaways Over the age of 12 below 18	- Foster care	- Males that ran away spent a year average longer in placement than females than ran away - Females first placement tended to be an emergency shelter - Males were more likely to be held in police detention when first picked up as a runaway - More than 40% of the runaway sample had a run in with the justice system	- Placement instability increased risk - Females were more likely to run - Older youths were more likely to run
10	Kim et al (2015) United States Cross-Sectional	110,576 cases from 39 states 58497 boys 52081 girls Aged between 12 – 17	- Foster Care	- Children diagnosed as emotionally disturbed were less likely to runaway - Ethnicity was not more likely to increase runaway behaviour	- Older children were more likely to runaway - Females were more likely to runaway - Children removed from a single parent household were more likely to runaway - Children with placement instability were more likely to runaway - Children removed by court order were more likely to runaway
11	Biehal et al (1999) United Kingdom Cross Sectional	Survey of 210 young people Data from 2227 incidents of (272 young people) Aged between 11 – 16	- Residential Care home	- Those young people who went missing to be with friends or family (the 'friends' profile) tended to be older and were more likely to be fostered. Although	- Friends profile -Older, longer, less repeated, less risky - Runaways profile – younger, repeated, risky - Experienced substance misuse

				they stayed away longer, they were less likely to have been in trouble with the police while missing and had gone missing less often in the past - Those whose absences approximated to the 'runaways' profile tended to be younger, to be in residential placements, to have gone missing more often and, as we shall see, their absences tended to involve greater risk. - A third of those than ran away and slept rough had been stabbed, robbed or stalked	- Offending was a problem - Rape, sexual assault and prostitution was a problem - Self-harm, aggression, low self esteem - Attachment difficulty to carers - Been victims of crime
12	Burke (1985) United States Cross Sectional	Two questionnaires given to 199 male youths Aged between 12 – 18 91 runaways 108 non runaways Average run-away incidents (n=7)	- Residential care home	- Runaways length of stay was 4 months less than non-runaways - Both the runaway and non-runaway are similar in that they: - Experiencing loneliness and discontent - Resentful of authority - Impulsive - Delinquency - Manifests in non-runaways in that they escape through fantasy,	- Delinquency manifests in runaways via aggression - Runaways had more previous placements - Runaways had a shorter stay in the treatment centre by approx. 4 months -
13	Roe (2000) United States	Data from 150 adolescents	- Residential care home	- Did not find that single parent households were	- Runaways were older - More previous placement

	Cross sectional	Aged between 14 – 18		associated with runaway behaviour - Sexual abuse with not associated with runaway behaviour - If siblings were placed together then there was a decrease in runaway behaviour - Non runner were more likely to have poor health or good health, runners had average health -	- More runaway incidents - More psychiatric hospitalisations - More aggressive/violent behaviour - victim of neglect, - poorer relationship with staff - parental rights terminated - Poor mental health
14	Cahill (1988) United States Cross Sectional	Data from 440 young people Aged between 14 – 17	- Hospital inpatient (not clear why young people were there)	- No significant difference between institutionalised runaways and institutionalised non-runaways with regards to: physical and/or sexual abuse, significant physical abuse or neglect,	- Significant difference between institutionalised runaways and institutionalised non-runaways with regards to drug and alcohol involvement and educational adjustment problems, academic achievement problems and high school dropout rates

Quality Assessment

See Table 2.2 for the quality assessment table, which highlights that most, if not all the studies are poor in terms of avoiding bias, or the method of avoiding bias being used was inappropriate for the study in question. The studies will now be discussed collectively on why this may be.

Table 2.2.
Quality assessment table (N=14)

ID.	STUDY	1. Did the study address a clearly focused issue?	2. Was the sample recruited in an acceptable way?	3. Were the children in local authority care, was this clearly stated	4. Was the study instrument that measured the parameter of interest shown to have validity and reliability?	5. Did the study identify characters for runaway behaviour	6. Did the authors identify important confounding factors? Were these considered in the research design & analysis?	7. Random sequence generation: Was there randomization of selection?	8. Allocation concealment: Was there concealment of which group participant will be allocated to?	9. Blinding of participants and personnel Assessments should be made for each main outcome (or class of outcomes).	10. Blinding of outcome assessment Assessments should be made for each main outcome (or class of outcomes).	11. Incomplete outcome data Assessments should be made for each main outcome (or class of outcomes).	12. Selective reporting:
1 **POOR**	Fasulo et al (2002) United States Cross-Sectional	**YES**	**NO**	**YES**	**NO**	**YES**	**NO**	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**	**NO**	**YES**	**YES**
2 **POOR**	Thompson et al (2006)	**YES**	**NO**	**YES**	**NO**	**YES**	**YES**	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**	**NO**	**YES**	**YES**

	United States Cross-Sectional												
3 **POOR**	Lin (2012) United States Cross-Sectional	**YES**	**NO**	**YES**	**NO**	**YES**	**YES**	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**	**NO**	**YES**	**YES**
4 **FAIR**	McIntosh et al (2010) United States Cross-Sectional	**YES**	**YES**	**YES**	**YES**	**YES**	**NO**	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**	**NO**	**YES**	**NO**
5 **FAIR**	Eisengart et al (2007) United States Cross-Sectional	**YES**	**YES**	**YES**	**YES**	**YES**	**YES**	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**	**NO**	**YES**	**YES**
6 **POOR**	Biehal et al (2000)	**YES**	**YES**	**YES**	**NO**	**YES**	**NO**	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**	**NO**	**YES**	**YES**

	United Kingdom Mixed method												
7 **FAIR**	Nesmith (2006) United States Cross-Sectional	**YES**	**YES**	**YES**	**YES**	**YES**	**YES**	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**	**NO**	**YES**	**YES**
8 POOR	Courtney et al (2009) United States Cross Sectional	**YES**	**NO**	**YES**	**NO**	**YES**	**YES**	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**	**NO**	**YES**	**NO**
9 **POOR**	Sarri et al (2016) United States Cross Sectional	**YES**	**NO**	**YES**	**NO**	**YES**	**YES**	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**	**NO**	**YES**	**YES**
10 **POOR**	Kim et al (2015)	**YES**	**NO**	**YES**	**NO**	**YES**	**NO**	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**	**NO**	**YES**	**YES**

	United States Cross-Sectional												
11 **POOR**	Biehal et al (1999) United Kingdom Cross Sectional	**YES**	**YES**	**YES**	**NO**	**YES**	**NO**	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**	**NO**	**YES**	**YES**
12 **GOOD**	Burke (1985) United States Cross Sectional	**YES**	**YES**	**YES**	**YES**	**YES**	**NO**	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**	**NO**	**NO**	**NO**
13 **FAIR**	Roe (2000) United States Cross sectional	**YES**	**YES**	**YES**	**NO**	**YES**	**YES**	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**	**NO**	**YES**	**NO**
14 **POOR**	Cahill (1988) United States	**YES**	**YES**	**YES**	**YES**	**YES**	**NO**	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**	**NO**	**YES**	**YES**

	Cross Sectional

Selection bias

All the studies, including those with mixed methods employ the use of gaining information from organisations or governmental forms that have already been collected. This means that in some cases the researchers can cherry pick what information they want the organisations to provide for them, rather than receiving all the information and dealing with that comes up naturally. Also, the researcher does not get to pick their sample, they are given a set of data and can either modify their research so that it fits the data they have, or they must exclude what could be a lot of data to make a fit to what they are researching.

Study design

Like the point above, most studies utilise a cross sectional method using data that has previously been collected, without reiterating what has already been said. The use of the cross-sectional design has limitations inferring causality between variables. In terms of attempting to use the Cochrane Risk of Bias sheet, it was difficult to mention whether confounding variables had been controlled as cross-sectional designs struggle to control all the variables.

Blinding

As discussed throughout this section, the information was given to researchers, or accessed via surveys, therefore the individual participants are unknown to the researcher using the data, however the researchers knew the intervention groups and manipulated the data they had as they wished to knowingly, which could have affected their results.

Data collection methods

As in many cases the researchers did not collect the data themselves, it is difficult to comment on the data collection methods, it also leaves questions in how the original data was collected and whether it was done appropriately. The researcher would not know and neither for the sake of this review do we, which leaves the risk of bias for many of these papers being high.

Attrition and withdraws

It was difficult to count withdrawal and attrition rates or to even know if participants had this option, as in many cases the data was collected by the government or organisations and then given to the researcher. Any reductions in sample size were decided by the researcher for various reasons stated and not by the participants. In some cases, the researchers are dealing with hundreds of thousands of people in their sample sizes and it would be difficult to track them down, should the data not be anonymous to ask if they are happy for their data to be used.

Main Findings

Runaways

It was not possible to conduct a metanalysis for runaway vs non-runaways as not all the studies had a comparison group. However, commenting on the results, Thompson et al (2006) highlighted that there were significant differences between recurrent runaways and isolated event runaways. Nesmith (2006) and Courtney et al (2009) highlighted that those with a previous runaway history were more likely to run away again. Biehal et al (2000) and Biehal et al (1999) discussed two different runaway profiles: the short-term runaways that ran away in groups, tended to be younger, get involved in crime, used the local authority accommodation as a base to sleep in between runaway episodes and usually returned by the police. The long-term runaways tended to go to visit friends or family, they didn't get in

trouble and tended to be older, they usually returned voluntarily. It is important to note that this would be considered runaway findings for US samples, as the majority of studies are from US populations and as already discussed, there are significant differences between child protection systems across the globe which are not generalisable due to societal and cultural differences.

Tools for assessment

Generally, studies didn't use assessment tools, Nesmith (2006) used the Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL), Eisengart et al (2007) used the Child Functional Assessment Rating Scale (CFARS), and Burke (1985) used the Millon Adolescent Personality Inventory (MAPI). These tools are not specific for looking at runaway behaviour in LAC, or even for looking at runaway behaviour. However, what they do did was measure child internalising and externalising behaviours (CBCL), assess the functional and psychiatric status of children aged 7 – 18 years (CFARS), and identify a variety of psychological adolescent characteristics. This was useful as it provided additional information into the mental and emotional wellbeing of the samples in a more reliable and valid way. Nakamura et al (2008) showed that the CDCL has a Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.71 to 0.89, as well as a high convergent and divergent validity with regards to the DSM-Oriented Scales. Similarly, within this study professionals used the CDCL, and Dutra, Campbell and Westen (2004) found that there was impressive validity and acceptable reliability, although they thought problems failed to load onto externalising factors. Where the CFARS has an interrater reliability of $r>.5$. The CDCL found that the children's externalising score could predict running away and the CFARS found that children discharged due to running away from residential care were different on the CFARS items to children discharged for any other reason. Burke (1985) also demonstrated that the MAPI's high validity and reliability ratings assisted to attempt initial personality profiling for inpatient runaways, and non-runaways.

Gender differences

Gender differences are often disputed in runaway children studies, however, within the LAC sample gathered here, the studies generally seem to agree that older females are more likely to runaway than males. This agrees with available literature about local authority children and is particularly useful as the total sample number here is large and covers a large range of LAC, specifically in the US. Fasulo et al (2002), Thompson et al (2006), Lin (2012), Eisengart et al (2007), Courtney et al (2009) and Sarri et al (2016) concurred with this sentiment, however, Biehal et al (2000) considered that females were just as likely as males to run away, interestingly, this was one of two studies in the UK, and the other study by the same author found similar results – although it must be considered that not only was it by the same author, but it was also using the same data. It would be difficult to draw conclusions based on this result without further runaway studies from the UK. It is also important to highlight that Kim et al (2015) adds to the dispute as it has a much higher sample size, suggesting a wider representation of children, and suggested that males are more likely to runaway than females.

Prevalence of male and female runaways

Table 2.3.

Prevalence of male and female runaways

Study no	Country	Year	Sample size (N)	Male %	Female%
1 Fasulo et al (2002)	US	2002	147	46.3	53.7
2 Thompson et al (2006)	US	2006	15 531	37.8	62.2
3 Lin (2012)	US	2012	8047	46.1	53.8
8 Courtney et al (2009)	US	2009	14 282	48.7	51.3

9 Sarri et al (2016)	US	2016	371	43.7	56.3
10 Kim et al (2015)	US	2015	110 579	52.9	47.1
Mean (Standard Deviation), n=6 studies			148 957	45.9 (4.6)	54.1 (4.6)

*Studies 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13 and 14 were not able to be added to the prevalence of runaways as they did not clearly state the number and gender of the runaways in their studies. They were predictive studies looking at collectives of data.

Table 2.3 would suggest that by looking at six of the 14 studies as a collective and doing statistics we can see that there appears to be a slightly higher prevalence of females that runaway than males. This would agree with the majority of literature that suggests that females tend to runaway more than males, also the fact that the prevalence is similar and the standard deviation overlaps would account for studies sometimes reporting that there are no gender differences. It is important to consider that these studies are all primarily from a foster care sample, so perhaps suggests that there is a slightly higher prevalence of females that runaway than males within foster care. Furthermore, using the Sign Test it is highlighted that there is a trend of higher prevalence of females running away than males, but not a significant difference. (n=6, K=1, p= <0.11).

Age

Most of the studies suggested that older children were more likely to runaway than younger children (Fasulo et al, 2002, Lin, 2010, McIntosh et al, 2010, Eisengart et al, 2007, Biehal et al, 2000, Nesmith, 2006, Courtney et al, 2009, Sarri et al, 2016, Kim et al, 2015, Biehal et al, 1999) this seemed to be linked to the idea that the other children that ran away tended to have been removed from their families older, and tended not to have had a choice,

so, in many cases they ran to return back to friends and/or family. This also agrees with general literature about runaway children, specially that there are two types, those that run away to be with friends and/or family, and those that runaway for short bursts and use their accommodation as a safe base. Only Thompson et al (2006) did not discuss the impact of age, except to say that it had no bearing on whether a child had a single runaway episode or many, therefore it was difficult to say whether it agreed on whether older or younger children were found more likely to run away.

Trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are common in local authority care children; therefore, it was expected that many of the runaways would have experienced some sort of trauma or adversity. Thompson et al (2006), Lin (2012), McIntosh et al (2010), Biehal et al (2000), Nesmith (2006), Courtney et al (2009), Sarri et al (2016), Kim et al (2015), and Biehal et al (1999) all highlight ACEs and Trauma as predictors of runaway behaviour, this includes abuse, neglect, prostitution, being forcibly removed, criminality, substance misuse, bullying and schooling issues, poor socio-legal/socio-economic status, bereavement, being stalked, stabbed, robbed, emotional and behavioural difficulties, gang involvement, delinquency, multiple moves and placements etc. Fasulo et al (2002) suggested that sexual abuse was not related to runaway behaviour, which was contrary to their hypothesis and they did not discuss why this result may have occurred. Eisengart et al (2007) suggested that trauma was not a predictor of runaway, however this sample was of young people in a psychiatric hospital that were discharged due to running away, there was no significant differences in level of trauma for those in the hospital that were discharged due to running away and those discharged due to another reason. Therefore, trauma may still be a predictor for running away as these other studies suggest. Cahill (1988) suggested that the reason that

trauma, particularly sexual abuse is not always highlighted as a predictor could be because abuse occurs in all socioeconomics levels, background and educational levels, and depending on the sample collected, depends on whether the 'comparator' has a low or high abuse rate which may impact whether or not abuse is analysed as a significant result (Cahill, 1988).

Placement stability and type.

All studies discussed that placement stability was a predictor of runaway behaviour, the more placements that a young person had experienced, the more likely they were to run away. This agrees with literature, claiming that the more disrupted attachments due to multiple moves, the more young people have difficulty attaching with subsequent carers. Also, Courtney et al (2009), highlighted that the type of local authority placement had an impact on risk of running away, particularly that relative foster placement had a reduced chance of runaway behaviours compared to non-relative foster placements. Most importantly, residential care homes such as support accommodations were the highest predictors of runaway behaviours, whilst interestingly hospitals and correctional placements showed a decrease in runaway behaviours, perhaps due to a difficulty in leaving the premises.

Psychotherapy and Mental Illness

A few of the studies discussed mental illness and therapy that the young people got and seemed to have varying results. This could be due to differences in operationally broad terms like mental illness, physical disabilities, emotional difficulties and how they impact the young people. Fasulo et al (2002) found that young people that received 10 or more sessions of psychotherapy were less likely runaway. Thompson et al (2006) and Biehal et al (1999) found those with suicidal ideation or self-harm were more likely to run away. Lin (2012) and Biehal et al (2000) found those with behavioural, physical or mental difficulties were more

likely to run away. Alternatively, Kim et al (2015) and Courtney et al (2009) found that those with cognitive delays, developmental delays, schizophrenia, or psychosis were less likely to run away. As previously mentioned above, Kim et al (2015) acknowledged that their results clashed with previous literature but that the database they were using had very specific diagnoses which meant that that different mental illnesses and conditions could be correlated with runaway behaviour. They suggested that in future, further research needs to expand on this to see which specific conditions correlate with runaway behaviour.

Risk factors associated with runaway children in the care of the local authority.

Table 2.4.

Risk factors associated with runaway looked after children.

Runaway Risk Factors	Associated with Children in Foster Care	Total Number of Studies	Associated with Children in Residential Care	Total Number of Studies	Associated with Children in Local Authority Care	Total Number of Studies
Gender of runaway is greater for female	1, 3, 8, 9	4		0	1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 9	6
Sexual abuse		0	11	1	2, 11	2
Older child (16+)	1, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10	6	4, 5, 13	3	1,3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13	10

Poor familial relationships	3	1	5, 13	2	2, 3, 5, 13	4
Substance misuse	8	1	4, 5, 11	3	2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11,14	7
Placement instability	3, 8, 9, 10	4		0	3, 6, 8, 9, 10	5
Poor schooling		0	4	1	2, 4, 6, 14	4
Criminality		0	4, 11, 12	3	2, 4, 6, 11, 12	5
Ethnic differences	3, 7, 8	3		0	3, 7, 8	3
Prostitution		0	11	1	2, 6, 11	3
Mental illness	3, 8	2	5, 11, 13	3	2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 11, 13	7
Previous runaway history	7, 8	2	4, 13	2	2, 4, 7, 8, 13	5
Neglect, physical, emotional abuse	3	1	13	1	2, 3, 13	3

If we consider Table 2.4, and first look at the risk factors that come up most commonly in the 14 studies: older children, females, mental illness and substance misuse are the most reoccurring risk factors. This is interesting because mental illness is a risk factors that is still being debated within the field with some studies suggesting that there are some mental illnesses that would actually reduce the risk of runaway rather than increase it, such as psychotic illnesses like schizophrenia. This may suggest that future studies need to clarify

what is meant when they reference mental illnesses, so that a clear pattern can be ascertained. The other most reoccurring risk factors are in line with the conclusions drawn during this systematic review, it would be interesting to see how this comes up in the future studies during this thesis. Biehal et al (2000) and Thompson et al (2006) were removed for the below analyses due to mixed samples and inability to separate for residential care home and foster care. Cahill (1988) was removed due to being an inpatient mental health setting.

If we look at the risk factors in foster care, being female is substantially higher, which we have already ascertained further up. This is interesting because boys were reported to be more represented in foster care within American samples, (Lin, 2012) and yet this did not come out as significant although a trend. Substance misuse also seemed to be less common, although to some extend that may not be surprising if the young person is in a family environment where there is more supervision compared to a children's home, similar with criminality and prostitution. Poor schooling was found not to be common in foster care children, again with increased supervision, there may be more emphasis on young people to attend schooling in the samples captured, especially since they are from foster care agencies.

If we look at the risk factors most common in residential care, poor familial relationships, poor schooling, sexual abuse, substance misuse and criminality were more common, this is hypothesised to be because there is more likely to be a greater stretch of resources between more children in a residential care home, which means less supervision. Less supervision leads to more adversity.

Discussion

As previously discussed of the 14 studies, only three used tools to assess runaway behaviour, and these three tools were not specifically made for this purpose despite reasonable validity and reliability scores. The limitation in both cases were that the tools were not appropriate for purpose, in that some of the data collected was not related to runaway behaviour. All studies recommended that a tool specifically validated for runaway behaviour would need to be developed.

Unexpectedly, there seemed to be some inconsistency over whether sexual abuse was a predictor of runaway behaviour. The Rothman Study as cited by Yates, MacKenzie, Pennbridge and Cohen (1998) estimated that 29% of youth runaways had been sexually abused. Older studies suggest that more than 50% of homeless and runaway adolescents report being sexually abused (Janus et al, 1987 as cited by Tyler, Hoyt and Whitbeck, 2000) however Tyler, Hoyt and Whitbeck (2000) suggested that the sexual abuse could be due to the additional risks faced during runaway. Kaufman and Widom (1999) found that the additional risk posed by being a runaway is less for abused and neglected children than for children who are not abused or neglected. The interesting matter is that abuse and neglect, like other broad factors are grouped together, rather than analysed separately, therefore it would be interesting to see whether verbal, physical or sexual abuse or neglect had different impacts on runaway behaviour for runaway and non-runaway young people, as studies do not seem to differentiate like Fasulo et al (2002) did.

Generally, studies about mental illness and runaway behaviour in children, not specifically LAC, suggest that the presence of mental illness is one of the predictors of increased runaway behaviour. Kim et al (2015) suggested that research needs to be expanded because it could be that specific diagnoses predict runaway behaviour. There is research that agrees with this to

some extent. For example, Hammer Finkelhor and Sedlak (2002) discuss that severe mental illness is prevalent in runaway children but do not specify the type or diagnosis, despite their strong recommendations. Whitbeck, Johnson, Hoyt and Cauce (2004) discuss that young people who runaway are likely to meet DSM criteria for mental illnesses and disorders but do not specify further than conduct disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and major depressive episodes. Research generally agrees that mental health is important to predicting runaway behaviour but not how it does this. Kim et al (2015) however, discussed that their database definition of emotional disturbances covered a range from depression, to psychosis, to autistic symptoms. Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), or autistic traits appeared less likely to runaway, which suggests that perhaps the different disorders may have different impacts on runaway behaviour and Courtney et al (2009) concurred, as they found that those with psychosis or schizophrenia also were less likely to run away.

Implications

There are differences between short term and long-term runaways, there are also differences between female and males therefore the interventions for both need to be slightly different and services need to reflect this. There are still areas of dispute such as ethnicity, age, trauma/abuse, and mental illness which may suggest that studies are not robust enough to capture the effect they have on runaway behaviour. These implications are incredibly important in terms of future intervention and caring of local authority children, therefore it would be important to investigate these matters closely before actioning anything.

Limitations

Primarily, the limitation of this systematic review is the quality of the studies included. However, it is important to note that due to the sensitivity of the topic and the vulnerability of the sample group, many studies will be weaker, such as having a cross sectional design, with no attempt at blinding and the researchers not having personally

collected the data. It is only through systematic reviews such as this highlighting why closer research is so important that the possibility of stronger study designs may be possible in future.

It was difficult to compare the studies due to the mix of different types of local authority care (correctional services, psychiatric hospitals, support accommodation, foster care) and different age groups. Not only this, but the term runaway has different means to different services, councils, cities and countries, it is not operationalised well, or if it is, they are operationalised differently which makes comparison nigh impossible.

A combination of the factors above, primarily around operationalisation and the comparability of different services and ages, means that generalising results can be risky. A lot of run-away local authority care studies come from the US or UK, and when literature has already highlighted that there are cultural differences in runaway behaviour it would be wrong to generalise the results from a systematic review with data from only these two countries globally. Particularly in this systematic review, the majority of studies came from the US, child protection in the US and the UK are significantly different, and therefore as previously discussed generalising results and/or making suggestions for future intervention are not compatible.

Future research

The studies here are mostly western, focusing on UK but mostly US samples, it would be difficult to generalise results as literature has suggested that cultural differences do have an impact on runaway behaviour. Furthermore, different countries and societies have different ideas and opinions on the definition of a runaway. Future research would require a

review on European, Asian, African characteristics as a start to ascertain similarities and differences before moving forward.

More work needs to be done on the impact of abuse, ethnicity and age as results are still not conclusive, the use of cross-sectional studies means that analysis is still not going to account for cause although it is considered that the sensitivity of the subject means that the chosen method is most sensitive and ethical. Most studies did not use tools to capture risk characteristics, and those that did were not using appropriate tools that captured characteristics related to running away. It would be important that such tools began being developed.

Conclusion

This systematic review set out to find which characteristics were present in local authority children that go missing to therefore to have an idea of the characteristics that increased the likelihood of running away. Throughout this piece it has been suggested that the following characteristics seem to be present: older children, females, ACEs (substance misuse, abuse, crime), poor economic status, previous history of runaway, placement type, placement instability, trauma, school attendance.

Before services can be better informed to improve interventions to reduce runaway behaviour, tools need to be developed in order to capture these risk characteristics and highlights plainly the children at risk, also more work needs to be done in order to ensure that the right characteristics are being captured for the right sample groups, to ensure that intervention can be tailored to the right vulnerable groups.

CHAPTER THREE

PSYCHOMETRIC CRITIQUE OF THE ADOLESCENT CONCERNS EVALUATION

Psychometric Critique of the Adolescent Concerns Evaluation

Abstract

Before the development of new risk assessments to predict runaway behaviours in LAC can take place, old, validated assessments need to be evaluated. The Adolescent Concerns Evaluation, as one of the few well-developed tools were critiqued in order to learn where improvement needed to be made. The Adolescent Concerns Evaluation proves a versatile tool, with many uses. Easy to use for different ages due to the Likert-style design, and multi-faceted due to the use of different dimensions. Unfortunately, whilst the Adolescent Concerns Evaluation has had reliability and validity testing, research did not finish due to economic viability which has left questions about normative data and concurrent validity, these questions impact the tools usability.

Psychometric Critique of the Adolescent Concerns Evaluation

By the end of this thesis, it is hoped that a runaway risk assessment will be on the way to being developed to highlight the LAC who are most at risk of running away. This is to better concentrate resources and arrange support for those who most need it and reduce the strain on already overloaded services. Before developing a psychometric, it is important to consider those that already exist with regards to runaway children and to have a look at what is a 'good' psychometric.

Lewis and Loewenthal (2015) suggest that the following checklist are features of a good psychometrics and should be considered both when using and developing them: a statement of what the scale measures, justification for the scale including its uses, and the advantages over existing measures, how the preliminary pool of items was drawn up, a description of the sample used for testing, an indication of the populations for whom the measure would be appropriate, descriptive statistics, means, standard deviation, ranges and different subscales, reliability statistics, validity statistics and the scale itself including instructions, items or an examples of the items included.

When looking at runaway children as a topic, and considering the steps to develop a psychometric, it is important to consider the concept and whether it is unitary. Running away is a longstanding issue that is universally getting worse and costing millions across the globe, however due to a lack of reliable and valid instruments, research and practice is slow to develop and change (Springer, 1998). Something that stands in the way of this is that the term 'runaway' has multiple definitions and terms; and the people, whether they are children, adolescents or adults that runaway are not homogeneous (Springer, 2001). This means that

operationalising details can reduce the suitability of developed tools depending on the sample, and marginalised samples can get left out, even though they may be the ones most at risk. There are two psychometrics that are known to have been specifically developed around runaway behaviour, the first attempt was by Phyllis Post and Douglas McCoard (1994) called The Needs of Adolescent Runaways (NAR), and later further developed by Professor David Springer (1998) who created the Adolescent Concerns Evaluation (ACE). This critique will move on to introducing both of these instruments in detail before looking at Lewis and Loewenthal's (2015) checklist when further discussing the ACE. The ACE is the primary tool being critiqued as it is the most similar type of the two psychometrics that this thesis aims to develop, with some advancements given the progressions in research since that time. The aim from this critique is to take the good things from the ACE and improve them with research advancements for the new tool, and to be mindful of the limitations, so that the same are not repeated.

The NAR by Post and McCoard (1994)

The NAR (see below) is a list of 45 items that assessed the young people after they had returned from a runaway episode, to assess the needs that they had, which would be useful in protecting and supporting those that had returned from a runaway episode. Each of the items were assessed on a four-point Likert type scale with the anchors 'not at all' and 'a great deal'. The scale took approximately 30 – 45 minutes to complete. There were three dimensions to the questions, 14 items related to the external, social deviance and had high internal consistency. The second dimension had 7 items and related to feelings; this also had a high internal consistency. The third dimension had 7 items which were related to communication and had an internal consistency of 0.79. The NAR had concurrent validity as

it had negative correlations with the scales of the Tennessee self-concept scale which suggested that the higher the level of need the lower the self-concept. A higher score on the NAR negatively correlated with self-concept, a higher score gave indications of which areas needed intervention for schools, social workers, and other professional services. Regardless of the positive nature of this instruments, it was not able to track treatment progress or to highlight those that were at risk of running away prior to an episode, and there were no other psychometrics able to do this, this is where the ACE came in.

Needs of Adolescent Runaway Evaluation, Post and McCoard (1994)

Item	Not at all			A great deal
1. To learn to talk to people my own age	1	2	3	4
2. To learn to talk to my parents	1	2	3	4
3. To make friends	1	2	3	4
4. Help with knowing how to say 'no' to my friends	1	2	3	4
5. To learn to ask others for help	1	2	3	4
6. To learn to relate to adults who have authority over me	1	2	3	4
7. To learn to understand others	1	2	3	4
8. To learn to listen to others	1	2	3	4
9. To learn how to cope with my problems	1	2	3	4
10. To learn to cope with stress that I feel	1	2	3	4

11.	A community recreation center where I can talk with friends and participate in activities	1	2	3	4
12.	Help to find a place to live	1	2	3	4
13.	Help with having a better living situation at home	1	2	3	4
14.	Help with my school work	1	2	3	4
15.	Tutoring for some of my school work	1	2	3	4
16.	Help to finish school	1	2	3	4
17.	Help in learning to cope with conflict with teachers, principals, and other school personnel	1	2	3	4
18.	Help with improving my school attendance	1	2	3	4
19.	Sex education	1	2	3	4
20.	Help in making decisions about sex and sexuality	1	2	3	4
21.	Information about where to go for help about a pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and birth control.	1	2	3	4
22.	Information about drug and alcohol	1	2	3	4
23.	Help in making decisions about drugs and alcohol	1	2	3	4
24.	Help with being honest	1	2	3	4
25.	To learn not to violate rules	1	2	3	4

26.	Help to find my legal rights	1	2	3	4
27.	Help because I am a victim of violence at home	1	2	3	4
28.	Help because I am a victim of violence at school	1	2	3	4
29.	Help because I am a victim of violence in the community	1	2	3	4
30.	Help with knowing how to deal with gangs	1	2	3	4
31.	Help so I won't commit crimes against things	1	2	3	4
32.	Help so I won't commit crimes against people	1	2	3	4
33.	Help because others say I eat too much/too little	1	2	3	4
34.	Help with my weight	1	2	3	4
35.	Help with being able to sleep	1	2	3	4
36.	Help because I feel depressed	1	2	3	4
37.	Help because I feel anxious	1	2	3	4
38.	Help because I feel afraid	1	2	3	4
39.	Help because I feel worthless	1	2	3	4
40.	Help because I feel angry	1	2	3	4
41.	Help because I feel lonely	1	2	3	4
42.	Help because of feeling about suicide	1	2	3	4
43.	Help with making decisions for myself	1	2	3	4

44. Help with finding a job	1	2	3	4
45. Help with deciding what career I will have	1	2	3	4

The ACE by Springer (1998)

The ACE (see below) was developed for the social work profession, to highlight the children at risk via a 40 question five-point Likert style rating scale with four dimensions that are both separate and interdependent. The four dimensions are: family, school, peer and individual. Springer (1998) does not discuss how each of the 40 items load onto the factors/dimensions, however comments that anything less than 0.60 which did not cause a major loss to the domain was deleted and the remaining items 'loaded well'. The idea is that once the children at risk have been ascertained, then intervention could begin to support the children and reduce those risks. This scale initially seems better suited to measuring runaway behaviour as it is multi-dimensioned, therefore suiting homogeneous sample groups. It can be used before, during and after treatment, therefore it is versatile. It also has a simple rating system therefore administration, and scoring can be conducted without further training, however the time of administration is not suggested by Professor Springer.

Adolescent Concern Evaluation

Name: _____

Today's Date:_____

This questionnaire is designed to measure how you see the world around you. Since these are your personal views, there are no right or wrong answers. Please answer as honestly as

possible. Some items ask about relationships with parents. If you are not living with a parent, then for those items think about your primary adult caretaker(s).

Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement by placing a number beside each one as follows:

1 = strongly disagree

2 = disagree

3 = neither agree nor disagree 4 = agree

5 = strongly agree

FIRST, THINK ABOUT YOUR FAMILY LIFE.

1. ____ I am not comfortable talking to my parents about my problems.
2. ____ My mother and I get along well.
3. ____ My father and I get along well.
4. ____ My parents do not understand me.
5. ____ I enjoy spending time with my family.
6. ____ I do not feel safe at home.
7. ____ I am not listened to in my family.
8. ____ My feelings are respected in my family.
9. ____ My parents demand too much from me.
10. ____ The rules in my family are not fair.
11. ____ I feel my parents trust me.
12. ____ All in all, I like my family.

NOW, THINK ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH SCHOOL.

13. ____ I have good relationships with my teachers.
14. ____ My teachers are hard on me.
15. ____ I get into trouble at school.
16. ____ School is easier for other people than it is for me.
17. ____ Finishing high school is important to me.
18. ____ School is helping me prepare for my future.
19. ____ I am not usually happy with my grades.
20. ____ My friends generally do not go to school.
21. ____ I do not enjoy school.

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1 = strongly disagree

2 = disagree

3 = neither agree nor disagree

4 = agree

5 = strongly agree

NOW, THINK ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH YOUR PEERS.

22. ____ I am well liked by my peers.
23. ____ I do not fit in with my peers.
24. ____ My peers seem to respect me.
25. ____ I do not feel like part of the group.
26. ____ My parents do not approve of my peers.

27. ____ My peers seem to care about me.

28. ____ I have a lot of fun with my peers.

FINALLY, THINK ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT YOUR LIFE.

29. ____ I feel depressed a lot of the time.

30. ____ I feel hopeless about my situation.

31. ____ I think about suicide.

32. ____ I feel worthless.

33. ____ I can't do anything right.

34. ____ I handle my problems well.

35. ____ I feel trapped.

36. ____ I feel good about myself.

37. ____ I deal well with stress.

38. ____ I feel angry a lot of the time.

39. ____ I do not feel like I have control over my life.

40. ____ I feel that others would be glad if I wasn't around.

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Reliability

Lewis and Loewenthal (2015) defined reliability as simply "consistency". The test / measure / psychometric / risk assessment needs to consistently give similar results to similar people. If the same person takes the same test at a different time under the same conditions

would they get a similar score? Reliability is the consistency with which the test measures a concept, in this case, the reliability of the ACE would be the consistency to which it would measure the risk of a child running away.

The ACE used internal consistency measures to measure its reliability specifically through the standard error of measurement (SEM). Harvill (1991) described the SEM as the standard deviation of error of measurement associated with the scores of the individual. It expresses the unreliability of a test in an understandable way by producing a numerical value which is the difference between an actual or obtained score, and the theoretical true score. If a test is completely reliable then the SEM would be 0, but if the test is completely unreliable then the SEM would be equal to the standard deviation of the observed scores. The ACE was reported to have low SEM scores (Springer, 1998) however, apart from reporting the scores and highlighting that they were low, there was little further explanation into what the original standard deviation of the observed scores were. Tighe et al (2010) highlighted that the use of the SEM in furthering reliability testing is wise as it is a better measure of the quality of an assessment than Cronbach's Alpha which can be changed by extending the length of a test (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). However, they also state that there are difficulties with people misinterpreting the results of the SEM, which may be a possibility in this case as the reliability scores of the SEM are not produced in the paper for readers to discover for themselves.

In terms of the Cronbach's Alpha, the ACE did well to stick to the general rule that anything about 0.6 was an accepted coefficient (Hudson, 1982) and those items that were not seen to add to the model or dimensions were deleted (Springer, 1998). Overall, three of the four domains of the ACE had a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.9 or above, there is a debate within the discipline that a high internal consistency coefficient and a poor content validity score may

suggest that a measure would be measuring only a portion of the construct it planned to (Briggs and Cheek, 1986). In this case, this would mean that four of those domains may be asking the same questions with different wording, so it is consistent, because the individual will answer the same way, but it is not truly measuring a construct because the question being asked is the same. Tavakol et al (2011) concur that an alpha higher than 0.9 may suggest "redundancies" in the construct validity and that the test may need to be shortened. Springer (1998) did discuss that the validation and reliability results reported were part of an ongoing process, and that external validity was low, construct and predictive validity needed to be established. Nevertheless, it should be commended that one of the first psychometrics of its time, managed to receive such promising initial reliability scores.

Validity

The Oxford dictionary defines validity as meaning "the quality of being logically or factually sound; soundness or cogency". When related to psychometric testing, Lewis and Loewenthal (2015) highlight that this means, "a valid test [that] measures what it is supposed to measure [and] unless a test is reliable it is unlikely to be valid". Validity in terms of psychometric testing is paramount as without it, inferences cannot be made about people on account of their scores (Coaley, 2010). There are many different types of validity testing, and the type used may depend on the psychometric being developed and the resources available. The British Psychological Society (BPS) Psychological Test Centre (PTC) website guidelines (2013) suggest that validity should be viewed as a unitary concept except for evidence gathering purposes, whether to strengthen or suggest improvements to a psychometric. This is how the ACE will be considered in this section.

Springer (1998) in his endeavour to provide evidence for the usefulness of the ACE as a tool to highlight the children at risk of running away clarified that he used five different

methods of testing validity: 1. Content Validity, 2. Factorial Validity, 3. Convergent and Discriminant Construct Validity, 4. Known-groups Discriminant Validity, and 5. Descriptive Discriminant Function Analysis.

Content validity is present when the items in a psychometric / test / measure / risk assessment are relevant to what is being measured (Haynes, Richard and Kubany, 1995). This can be assessed in a range of ways, such as by asking a panel of experts whether they agree that each item does what it should. Face validity is then judged by asking members of the target population who will complete the measure if the measure looks like it measures the concept it is aiming to (Nevo, 1985). In the ACE Springer (1998) ran focus groups to staff at a runaway shelter and the children that used them to establish face and content validity. Whilst this is a good start to establishing face and content validity, runaway behaviour is not homogenous as previously established and so, focus groups should have been run with staff members and service users from more than just one runaway shelter. Not all children will access a runaway shelter when they run away, so it would have been ideal to also attempt to run focus groups for staff and children from populations whereby children are most likely to run away, for example foster care groups, looked after care groups, and due to the ease of administration, these questionnaires or questions could have been run through social workers due to ethics. Lewis and Loewenthal (2015) examine the debate on whether much weight needs to be placed on content and face validity as some measures may need a level of secrecy in order to reduce social desirability in self-reporting measures; which may be in the case in this particular situation. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, if a test is reliable and valid by other means, then the face and content validity may not be a concern.

Factorial Validity is the concept of establishing validity of ambiguous concepts, which is the case here, as lots of different things make up running away, rather than a unitary

construct, as the risk of running away cannot be directly measured. This is therefore measured by a series of 'latent variables' (Gefen & Straub, 2005). A numerical value can be ascertained to see whether these latent variables are truly capable of being related to measuring ambiguous concepts. In this case the ACE used the multiple groups centroid method (Nunnally & Bernstrein, 1994, as cited by Springer, 1998) which showed that the ACE had evidence for factorial validity, by showing how well each item loaded onto their intended dimension. Gefen et al (2005) also discussed how factorial validity is further split into Discriminant and Convergent validity which must also be examined as they demonstrate how well each item correlates to the dimension it is related to.

Discriminant and Convergent validity are two elements that make up factorial validity, but they are also part of construct validity. According to Lewis and Loewenthal (2015), this is when a psychometric is formulated in the context of a theory which then makes prediction about behaviour using the outcomes of the psychometric. The ACE used specific demographical information to establish discriminant construct validity, and as expected found that that there were weak correlations with all items on the final version of the ACE, which supported that there was discriminant construct validity (Springer, 1998). This meant that the final items were unique and are not cross-correlating with the demographical measures that it was supposed to be different from (Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2015). The ACE also showed significant evidence of convergent construct validity by examining the Pearson's correlation between the final version of the ACE and the demographical characteristics acquired during the self-report, the strongest correlations were those that had been thrown out of the home, and those that had run away from home, suggesting that the items on the ACE were measuring the concepts relating to risk for running away (Springer, 1998). Furthermore, the four ACE dimensions were shown to correlation significantly with other established

instruments that they were supposed to associate, for example: The Family dimension correlated with the family subscale of the Hare Self Esteem Scale (HSS) and Index of Family Relations (IFR). The school dimension correlated with the school subscale of the HSS, peer dimension of the ACE correlated with the peer subscale of the HSS and the individual dimension of the ACE correlated with the Generalised Contentment Scale (GCS). The HSS was developed by Hare (1980) to measure self-esteem in school aged children, the IFR was developed by Hudson (1982) to measure the extent and severity of the problems that family members have in their difficulties with each other, and the GCS was developed by Hudson (1982) to measure the degree and severity of nonpsychotic depression.

As the ACE planned to be a predictive tool that wanted to differentiate between those at high and low risk of running away, it was important to see if the test had known groups discriminant validity. This would evidence whether the ACE could tell heterogenous samples apart. Considering that the ACE still does not have normative data, having an idea whether or not it has the power to differential between samples would be useful, as the user would be able to differentiate those at risk who were possibly eligible for intervention, in comparison to those at a lower risk in absence of normative data. Nurius and Hudson (1993) suggested that the statistic needed to be between 0.4 – 0.6 before computing the n statistic; however, the ACE provided evidence for known groups discriminant validity after computing the n statistic. All the ACE scores were between 0.52 – 0.65, this was confusing as it is unclear why the scores were computed, and whether it was to lower the n score, so it fit the necessary value. Regardless, all findings were found to be significant, which would suggest that to some degree the ACE can differentiate between high and low risk samples.

Finally, Springer (1998) used discriminant function analysis to begin validating the ACE. The use of this type of validity testing is generally used to determine which variables discriminate between naturally occurring groups (Poulsen and French, 2008). So, in this case Springer (1998) was looking at seeing which group (high risk or not high risk) an individual would be placed in based on their scores for each dimension. The ACE had a 86.3% and 88.3% chance of correctly classifying individuals into high risk and not high risk samples, the potential for a false positive was 8.2% misidentifying a child at risk, the number of false negatives was 19.6% not identifying a child that may be at risk. Although the rate of false negatives is a little higher than one would want, given the seriousness of incorrectly labelling a child as low risk, and then having them run away and potentially end up in danger. The ACE appears to be quite sensitive and specific to errors, in its initial testing phase.

Training and Supervision

The ACE is such, that it can be administered by anyone, but particularly developed for social workers and intake workers at runaway shelters (Springer, 1998 & 2001). This is helpful as it means that no additional time needs to be spent training in the psychometric before it can be administered, and it is not a labour intensive psychometric, which is also useful when working with children who may be unsettled, or potential runaways.

Springer (1998) details out how to score and administer the ACE to an extent that supervision would not be necessary during or after the psychometric. However, due to there being no normative data, it might be appropriate to consult with experienced people in the field about children that may be on the cusp of being deemed as low or high risk.

Administration and Scoring

The ACE has been developed with the needs of the children in mind, this means that it is a self-reported measure in which the psychometric is prepared to capture the experiences of the child themselves. However, this comes with its own difficulty, which Springer (1998) highlights in his own critique, final scores must be interpreted with caution due to the potential for social desirability. The potential implication of such an inventory may have impact on the support, care package or placement that a child receives and so depending on their motivations or the outcome that they want, they may change their answers to protect others, relationships, or themselves. Springer (2001) also discussed that the use of the ACE was only appropriate with young people who were stable, and not in acute crisis. This could be an issue when trying to access marginalised groups such as 'throw away children', 'chronic runaways' or 'looked after children' there may not be a time when they are stable, and how would stabilised be operationalised to know whether it was appropriate to administer this test, as it would be different for each young person. Would this then have an impact utility of the psychometric, considering the transient nature of the concept it is attempting to measure?

However, the advantages to this psychometric, mean that the test can be admitted quickly and also scored quickly as it is made in a Likert-scale design without requiring further software or designs to interpret the result. Ideally, Lewis and Loewenthal (2015) highlighted a good psychometric would be able to discuss normative scores and sample data. However, the ACE was still in the initiate stages of its validity and reliability testing when it was deemed as not commercially viable, therefore after Springer (1998) discussed that further researched needed to be done to establish predictive validity, construct validity and clinical cut off scores, this was not completed. The difficulty with this is that how can the

psychometric be interpreted because as there is not normative data, there is no expected result for higher risk and lower risk samples, we can only take the reported means from the initial Springer (1998) study and compare results against that.

Conclusion

The ACE was developed to be a versatile tool, to not only serve as a research tool used to evaluate different runaway interventions, to further research into runaway children, and to predict children who were at risk of running away. The use of the Likert-style design ensured that it was easy to give out to many children of different ages, and the use of different dimensions worked to ensure that many facets of a child's life could be covered in the test. Unfortunately, it was felt that the psychometric was not going to be economically viable for future use, and therefore the ACE was not further tested. Therefore, there are areas of its reliability and validity that are still in question, for example it may be worth comparing the NAR and the ACE in order to produce some evidence of concurrent validity for the ACE. Furthermore, there are areas of its interpretation such as its normative data that remains unknown, and there have been many advances in runaway data research since 1998 that may lead to changes in the way that the initial ACE was developed. The ACE provides a solid basis to begin research into further developing a more appropriate and modern assessment for predicting children at risk of running away.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE DIFFERENCE IN CIRCUMSTANCES WHEN UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM-SEEKING CHILDREN AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN ARE REPORTED MISSING IN ENGLAND.

The Difference in Circumstances When Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children and Looked After Children are Reported Missing in England.

Abstract

To investigate whether there was a difference when British LAC and UASC were reported missing. The research questions included police responses to runaway behaviour, characteristic differences, predicting who was most at risk of running away. The study was a non-experimental design looking at historical data from casefiles rather than directly interviewing participants, this was due to ethical concerns of asking potentially triggering questions to a vulnerable sample group, and because the UASC did not have English as a first language. An anonymised database of 107 individuals, aged between 16 and 21, was analysed using SPSS. The data provided demographic information, care and risk history, and incidents of runaway behaviour. Statistical tests were run to ascertain which characteristics were more likely to result in runaway behaviours. Runaway British LAC and UASC present with significantly different characteristics, within and between samples. Due to this, two logistic models were developed, the British LAC model had a predictability of 73.5% and the UASC model had a predictability of 79.6%. As there are significant differences when British LAC and UASC are reported missing, if a screening tool was developed to ascertain whether a young person was at risk of running away, there would need to be a one for each sample. Screening tools would be able to highlight those that needed prioritising for intervention.

The Difference in Circumstances When Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children and Looked After Children are Reported Missing in England.

There is a runaway crisis across the world, an issue that is mostly researched in the US and the UK. More attention be paid to this issue within the UK because not only are figures rising yearly, but Shalev-Greene and Pakes (2013) highlight that a realistic minimum approximate cost of a missing persons investigation is between £1325.44 to £2415.80. Currently, governmental budget cuts are increasing; putting further strain on civil services, who cannot afford to be spending large funds on missing persons campaigns. This is particularly relevant in the case of missing children cases, who class as high-risk cases due to their age, therefore costing civil services more suggested by Shalev-Green et al (2013). The National Crime Agency UK Missing Persons Bureau (2016) statistics 2014/15 cite that of the total 187,947 missing incidents, 125,576 (66.9%) were related to young people aged under 21. (The National Crime Agency UK Missing Persons Bureau, 2016). 44,189 of those were incidents of young people missing from care. This figure is an underestimate as not all police forced returned data, cases where young people were deemed to be 'absent' are not included (The National Crime Agency UK Missing Persons Bureau, 2016), and due to the circumstances of children in care, not all are reported to the authorities following good practice guidelines (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2013). Children's services are an area that have received some of the biggest governmental cuts, thus affecting the services available to looked after children who would support those at risk of running away. This is a particular issue when looking at missing children as seen in the evidence here a large proportion of young people reported missing are young people in the care system. The Suffolk Safeguarding Children Board (2016) statistics supported this

hypothesis, showing that children in care can be up to three times more likely to go missing than other children.

"Children in Care" is an umbrella term for any child that has input from the local authority, UASC are included. They are at risk of being reported missing or absent, and for being exploited during this time (Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Board, 2016). End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism (ECPAT) UK and Missing People announced in 2016 that in the period 2014/15 of the 4,744 unaccompanied children from 75 local authorities, 593 (13%) were reported as missing or absent at least once. Curiously, whilst a child is generally defined as up to the age of 18, a child under the care of the local authority may be defined as child up until age 21 and be eligible for the same care as peers up to the age 18 if they remain in education or training. This adds an additional element of difficulty when conducting research in terms of operationalising research terms and generalising results across cultures and societies which may already have different ideas and opinions about running away, and child protection.

There are differences in the running behaviour of British LAC and UASC, Rees' (2011) national survey highlighted that British children in care are more likely to run away due to abuse, neglect or coercion, and are at risk of serious harm if they are missing overnight. Links have also been made by the Department of Education (2014) between missing vulnerable young people and being exploited or turning to crime and substance misuse. Trafficking is a key issue for UASC; some go missing from care due to debt bonds, where they are pressured to return to exploitation in order to avoid consequences, such as their family being used as collateral (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre, 2010).

ECPAT UK (2016) found that in the time period of 14/15 of the 590 suspected UASC who were trafficked, 167 (28%) went missing.

Currently, when a young person in the care of the local authority is reported missing, the police can be contacted without waiting the statutory 24 hours. The police will also ask for a photograph, and a series of questions, including if anything has happened recently that would prompt a young person to run away. The sergeant on duty would decide whether they class the case as a missing or an absent person report and act accordingly until the young person is found or returns. The police should conduct a return to care interview following a missing episode whereby they check the wellbeing of the young person, unless there are extenuating circumstances (West Yorkshire Police, 2017).

Aim:

To build on the existing literature using an analysis of quantitative data to investigate whether there is a statistical difference in circumstance between UASC and British LAC when they were reported to the Police as missing. The hypotheses:

1) There would be no difference in police responses to reports of missing British Looked After Children (LAC) and reports of missing Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC).
2) `There would be no difference in the characteristics of young people who went missing between British Looked After Children (LAC) and Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC).
3) The study also aimed to identify any proximal and distal risk factors that may predispose young people from these samples to run away. The study attempted to

build a logistic regression model using the ascertained characteristics and proximal and distal risk factors.

Method

Design

Due to the sensitive nature of the study, particularly in adding a UASC sample where triggering questions referring to trauma backgrounds would be asked. Also, the difficulty in receiving ethics for working individually as a researcher with vulnerable populations, which required security clearances from the director of the LAC team; the study was a descriptive and explorative design using repurposed raw data from a care provider in the East Midlands.

Sampling

The sample was database of raw information on 113 mixed gendered young people aged between 16 – 21. The two key sample groups were British LAC and UASC who had originated from various countries across the world, not limited to: Albania, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Vietnam and Iran. Young people in the database who had not been recorded as having a missing or absent episode were kept in the sample to be used as a comparator. Exclusion criteria: UASC who had been deported after being age assessed as older, and UASC who had been moved to foster care following being assessed as younger. As a result of the exclusion criteria, six individuals were removed from the database giving a final sample size of 107 young people. As previously noted, children over the age of 18 up until the age of 21 still in education or training, and under the care of the local authority are still treated as children in the UK. Therefore, these young people are still counted as eligible for this study.

Instruments

The anonymised database was received from the care provider in a password protected excel file, stored within an encrypted memory stick each with separate passwords and a

erasure code should the password be guessed incorrectly more than three times. This file was converted into a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) data file. The data file comprised of a range of information that were hypothesised to suggest relationships between characteristic and runaway behaviour based on current literature. This data set also held information highlighting whether or not the police responded as statute commanded when a young person, regardless of whether they were a British or an UASC, was reported missing. The information was broken down into three sections:

Demographical information

The Demographical Information section covered age, place of birth, gender, nationality, educational or employment status, number of placements, length of care placement, type of care user and their legal status within the country. This assisted the researcher to understand the background of the sample.

Care and Risk History

Care history added further insight into the background of the sample, informing whether historical or environmental factors in their lives might have contributed towards being at risk of running away. This section looked at: contact with birth family; foster care history; adoption history if applicable; abuse history; criminal history; time spent in a youth offending institution; Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) involvement; psychiatric history, psychiatric medication history, gang culture; substance misuse; Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) history; and trafficking history.

Runaway history

The runaway history focused on experiences when the young person went missing or absent, for example: how many times they had been reported missing from the placement;

whether the police conducted a return interview; how long they were missing for and how they returned to the placement.

Statistical Analysis

The dataset was initially analysed using The Shapiro-Wilk test for normality, this was used rather than Kolmogorov-Smirnov due to the database size. As the sample sizes of the two groups were not equal, normality was ascertained by considering how the skewness/kurtosis static differed from the standard error value. The Shapiro-Wilk test displayed a significant result ($p>0.0001$) therefore the data was not normally distributed, and non-parametric tests were conducted. The data was analysed between and within group. Chi Square analysis were used as the data was nonparametric, using nominal variables with two or more possible values where we were attempting to infer a significant association between the variables. Chi Square tests ascertains this by determining whether the proportions of one variable significantly differ from the proportions of the other variable(s). When ascertained which variables would be appropriate predictors of runaway behaviour in this particular sample, the variables were run through a logistic regression model to predict the likelihood of UASC and British LAC running away. Logistic Regression is mathematical model used to predict the probability of a two answered response (i.e., yes/no) based on one or more independent variables.

Ethical Approval

Ethical approval was granted by the University of Nottingham's School of Medicine Ethics Committee on the 9th of June 2017.

Results

Demographical Information regarding the total sample pre analysis

Table 4.1 shows demographical information about the sample. Some data was missing on the young people because the provider did not have that information recorded, this data

included some of the birth continents of the young people, and how many placements they had previously had.

Table 4.1.

Demographic information on the Sample

	British LAC N=50 (%)	UASC N=57 (%)
Gender n=107		
Female	22(44.0)	2 (3.5)
Male	28 (56.)	55 (96.5)
Age Group n=107		
16	11 (22.0)	28 (49.1)
17+	39 (78.0)	29 (50.9)
Birth Continent n=102		
Europe	48 (96.0)	18 (34.6)
Asia & Middle East	1 (2.0)	19 (36.5)
Africa	1 (2.0)	15 (28.8)
Immigration n=107		
British and EU	50 (100.0)	0 (0)
Non-Status	0 (0)	34 (59.6)
Refugee Status	0 (0)	14 (24.6)
Appeal/Refused	0 (0)	9 (15.8)
Care Section n=107		
Section 20	37 (74.0)	57 (100)

Section 17	13 (26.0)	0 (0)
Employment Status n=107		
NEET	39 (78.0)	17 (29.8)
Education/Employment	11 (22.0)	40 (70.2)
No of Placements n=87		
Less than 7	25 (65.8)	49 (100)
7+	13 (34.2)	0 (0)

Characteristic information regarding the total sample pre analysis

Table 4.2 highlights the different characteristics collated in the database experienced for the sample in the database. Again, some data was missing because the provider did not have that information recorded, this included whether they had contact with their parents, had previously been involved in crime, had risk of CSE, history of trafficking, gang involvement, CAMHS involvement, substance misuse difficulties, youth offending team involvement or history of abuse or neglect.

Table 4.2.

Characteristic Information on Sample

	British LAC N=50 (%)	UASC N=57 (%)
Parent Contact n=92		
Yes	28 (57.1)	14 (32.6)
No	21 (42.9)	29 (67.4)
Fostered n=107		

Yes	29 (58.0)	8 (14.0)
No	18 (36.0)	46 (80.7)
Criminality n=93		
Yes	35 (70.0)	4 (9.3)
No	15 (30.0)	39 (90.7)
Child Sexual Exploitation n=99		
Yes	18 (36.0)	2 (4.1)
No	32 (64.0)	47 (95.9)
Trafficking History n=101		
Yes	0 (0)	14 (25.9)
No	47 (100.0)	40 (74.1)
Gang Involvement n=92		
Yes	14 (28.0)	3 (7.1)
No	36 (72.0)	39 (92.9)
Substance Misuse n=92		
Yes	36 (73.5)	4 (9.3)
No	13 (26.5)	39 (90.7)
Youth Offending Team n=96		
Yes	27 (56.3)	1 (2.1)
No	21 (43.8)	47 (97.9)
CAMHS n=98		
Yes	31 (62.0)	6 (12.5)
No	19 (38.0)	42 (87.5)

Abuse including neglect n=96		
Yes	31 (63.3)	3 (6.3)
No	18 (36.7)	44 (93.6)

Runaway information regarding the total sample pre analysis

Table 4.3 highlights the runaway demographical information for the sample. Out of the 107 individuals in care, there were 194 missing persons reports relating to 57 individuals (53%). The mean number of times an individual was reported missing or absent was 3.4 times.

Table 4.3.

Runaway information on sample

	British LAC N=50 (%)	UASC N=57 (%)
Runaway n=107		
Yes	31 (62.0)	26 (45.6)
No	19 (38.0)	31 (54.4)
Number of missing episodes n=107		
0	19 (38.0)	31 (54.4)
1-2	9 (18.0)	22 (38.6)
3-4	9 (18.0)	2 (3.5)
5+	13 (26.0)	2 (3.5)
How many times was there a return interview n=107		
0	42 (84.0)	56 (98.2)

1	4 (8.0)	0 (0)
2	1 (2.0)	1 (1.8)
3	2 (4.0))	0 (0)
5	1 (2.0)	0 (0)

Chi Square Analysis Between Group

Table 4.4.
Demographics and Characteristics of LAC and UASC in relation to running away (N= 107).

		LAC		UASC	
Characteristic		Runaway (LR) n=31	Non-runaway (LNR) n=19	Runaway (UR) n=26	Non-runaway (UNR) n=31
Birth Continent LRvLNR URvUNR*** LNRvUNR*** LRvUR***	Europe Asia & Middle East Africa	31 0 0	17 1 1	8 13 1	10 6 14
Age Group LRvLNR URvUNR* LNRvUNR LRvUR***	16 17+	7 24	4 15	17 9	11 20
Age Assessed LRvLNR URvUNR*** LNRvUNR*** LRvUR***	Yes No	0 31	1 18	14 12	29 2
Gender LRvLNR URvUNR LNRvUNR*** LRvUR**	Female Male	14 17	8 11	2 24	0 31
Care Section LRvLNR URvUNR LNRvUNR** LRvUR*	Section 20 Section 17	24 7	13 6	26 0	31 0
Parent Contact LRvLNR URvUNR LNRvUNR LRvUR	Yes No	16 14	12 7	4 11	10 18
Sibling Contact	Yes	15	12	4	11

LRvLNR	No	11	3	10	17
URvUNR	Not Applicable	4	4	0	0
LNRvUNR**					
LRvUR					
Adopted	Yes	2	0	1	0
LRvLNR	No	28	18	18	31
URvUNR					
LNRvUNR					
LRvUR					
Fostered	Yes	18	11	3	5
LRvLNR	No	12	6	20	26
URvUNR					
LNRvUNR***					
LRvUR***					
Known	Yes	20	11	1	2
Abuse/neglect	No	11	7	15	29
LRvLNR					
URvUNR					
LNRvUNR***					
LRvUR***					
Criminality	Yes	26	9	3	1
LRvLNR**	No	5	10	11	28
URvUNR					
LNRvUNR***					
LRvUR***					
Youth Offending	Yes	2	0	0	0
Institute					
LRvLNR					
URvUNR	No	29	19	17	31
LNRvUNR					
LRvUR					
CAMHS	Yes	22	9	3	3
Support	No	9	10	14	28
LRvLNR					
URvUNR					
LNRvUNR**					
LRvUR***					
Psychiatric	Yes	10	6	0	2
Medication	No	21	13	17	29
LRvLNR					
URvUNR					
LNRvUNR*					
LRvUR**					
Youth Offending	Yes	19	8	0	1
Team	No	10	11	17	30
LRvLNR					
URvUNR					
LNRvUNR***					
LRvUR***					
	Yes	26	10	1	3

Substance Misuse LRvLNR* URvUNR LNRvUNR** LRvUR***	No	4	9	15	24
Substance	Yes	6	4	1	0
intervention	No	25	15	16	31
LRvLNR URvUNR LNRvUNR* LRvUR					
Gang	Yes	8	6	2	1
Involvement	No	23	13	14	25
LRvLNR URvUNR LNRvUNR* LRvUR					
Trafficking	Yes	0	0	12	2
LRvLNR	No	29	18	12	28
URvUNR*** LNRvUNR LRvUR***					
Sexual	Yes	13	5	2	0
Exploitation	No	18	14	16	31
LRvLNR URvUNR LNRvUNR** LRvUR*					
Employment	NEET	26	13	14	3
Status	Education/Employment	5	6	12	28
LRvLNR URvUNR*** LNRvUNR*** LRvUR*					
Immigration	British and EU	31	18	0	0
LRvLNR	Non-Status	0	1	17	17
URvUNR	Refugee Status	0	0	4	10
LNRvUNR***	Appeal/Refused	0	0	5	4
LRvUR***					
No. of	Less than 7	13	12	21	28
Placements	7+	9	4	0	0
LRvLRN URvUNR LNRvUNR* LRvUR***					
Length of	Less than 6	19	10	12	8
Placement	months				
LRvLNR	Up to a year	4	5	6	12
URvUNR	More than a year	8	4	8	11

LNRvUNR LRvUR					
No. of missing episodes LRvLNR*** URvUNR*** LNRvUNR LRvUR***	1-2	9	0	22	0
	3-4	9	0	2	0
	5+	13	0	2	0
No. of missing episodes less than 24hrs LRvLNR*** URvUNR*** LNRvUNR LRvUR***	0	6	19	20	31
	1-2	9	0	5	0
	3-4	10	0	1	0
	5+	6	0	0	0
No. of missing episodes that lasted 24hrs LRvLNR*** URvUNR*** LNRvUNR LRvUR	0	13	19	16	31
	1-2	10	0	9	0
	3-4	7	0	1	0
	5+	1	0	0	0
No. of missing episodes longer than 48 hours LRvLNR*** URvUNR*** LNRvUNR LRvUR***	0	29	19	13	31
	1-2	2	0	13	0

Chi-squared test: *p < 0.05, ** P < 0.01, *** P < 0.001

Gender and Runaway Behaviour

There were no significant differences between gender and runaway behaviour, χ^2 (df=1) = 2.272, p = 0.132, and as shown in table 5 there were only 2 female UASC, therefore a cross tabulations table could not be accurately tested. As a result, the dataset was not separated by gender.

Children in Care and Runaway Behaviour

There was not a significant difference between whether or not British LAC and UASC decided to run away, χ^2(df=1) = 2.873, p = 0.066. However, there is enough in the

literature, and a small UASC sample group therefore, there is enough justification for still conducting between group analysis.

Circumstances When Running Away

There were significant differences in the number of times a young person was reported missing, χ^2 (df=2) = 17.670, $p < 0.0001$. UASC runaways were more likely to be reported 1-2 times whilst British LAC runaways were more likely to be reported more than 5 times. UASC runaways were significantly more likely to go missing more than 48 hours than British LAC runaways, χ^2 (df=1) = 13.830, $p < 0.0001$, these were the cases whereby they did not return. British LAC runaways were significantly more likely to go missing less than 24 hours at a time, χ^2 (df=3) = 21.774, $p < 0.0001$, than UASC runaways.

Placements

There were significant differences in the number of placements that a runaway young person experienced, a runaway British LAC was more likely to have 7 or more placements. This was an expected result as a British LAC has usually been in the system for a long period of time, this is evidenced in table 2, where most of the British LAC population have been in foster care. χ^2 (df=1) = 10.865, $p = 0.001$.

Known Abuse, including Neglect

Runaway British LAC were significantly more likely to have experienced abuse or neglect, χ^2 (df=1) = 14.495, $p < 0.0001$. This was difficult to ascertain due to language barriers and not wanting to induce trauma by asking runaway UASC to talk about experiences if they do not offer. Therefore, this variable covers known abuse and neglect from professional files and handover, however it must be considered that in any future inferences there may be errors; as it is based on previously confirmed information.

Criminality and Youth Offending Team (YOT)

Runaway British LAC were significantly more likely to have a history or risk of criminality, χ^2 (df=1) = 16.411, p < 0.0001. Furthermore, British LAC were significantly more likely to have a YOT supporting them, χ^2 (df=1) = 18.976, p < 0.0001. Criminality here did not include gang involvement, as this was found not be significantly different between the two runaway groups.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

Runaway British LAC were significantly more likely to have CAMHS support, χ^2 (df=1) = 12.508, p = 0.001. It is possible however, that British LAC were more likely to be referred to CAMHS services than, UASC.

Substance Misuse

Runaway British LAC were significantly more likely to have difficulty with legal or illegal substances, χ^2 (df=1) = 27.834, p < 0.0001. However, there were no differences between the runaway groups when it came to substance misuse intervention.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Runaway British LAC were significantly more likely to have a history or be at risk of CSE than UASC, χ^2 (df=1) = 5.094, p < 0.023. However, the majority of UASC are males coming from male dominated cultures, and therefore similar to disclosures of abuse, it may be difficult for UASC males to disclose CSE.

Age and Age assessments

Runaway UASC were significantly more likely to be aged 16 when they ran away, χ^2 (df=1) = 10.628, p = 0.001.

Chi Square Analysis Within Group

British and EU

History, Risk or Current Criminality

British LAC at risk, or with a history of criminal behaviour were significantly more likely to runaway than those without. χ^2 (df=1) = 7.474, p = 0.011. It is important to note that this criminal behaviour did not include gang related activities, this came back as non-significant, χ^2 (df=1) = 0.195, p = 0.750.

History or Current legal or illegal Substance Misuse

British LAC with a history or at risk of legal or illegal substance misuse were significantly more likely to run away than those without, χ^2 (df=1) = 6.913, p = 0.018. Those that had substance misuse intervention for their misuse were not found to be significantly different from those that had not had intervention, χ^2 (df=1) = 1.031, p = 0.413. it is important to note that there were not enough participants for an accurate cross tabulation therefore this result may not be an accurate reflection.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking

Employment Status

UASC who were Not in Education, Employment or Training were significantly more likely to run away than those who were. χ^2 (df=1) = 13.180, p < 0.0001.

Age Assessment

UASC who had been age assessed were significantly less likely to run away than those who had not. χ^2 (df=1) = 12.029, p < 0.001

History or Risk of Trafficking

UASC who had a history or were at risk of being trafficked were significantly more likely to run away than those not at risk. χ^2 (df=1) = 13.037, p < 0.0001.

Birth Continent

UASC who were born in Asia or the Middle East were significantly more likely to runaway than those born in Europe or Africa. Those born in Africa were the least likely to run away. χ^2 (df=2) = 13.148, p = 0.001. it is important to note that there are cells with a

count less than 5, but as this is more than a 2x2 table Fisher's Exact cannot be used. Therefore, this interpretation should be taken with caution as the Chi Square is invalid.

Returning to Care

Table 4.5 highlights the breakdown of how individuals returned to placement following a missing episode. A cross tabulations test demonstrated that there were significant differences in the method that young people used to return to placement, χ^2 (df=3) = 15.837, p = 0.001. Whilst the majority of runaway British LAC returned themselves, runaway UASC either did not return once they had runaway or returned themselves.

Table 4.5.

*How Runaway LAC and UASC Return****

How did the young person return?	Care Team Jurisdiction		
	British and EU LAC	UASC	Total
Police Return	6	1	7
Themselves	22	12	34
Did Not	1	12	13
Unknown	2	1	3

***P= less 0.001 df=3

Police Return to Care Interview

The Police conducted 18 interviews for nine individuals place with this provider, eight British LAC and one UASC. Due to the lack of data, it was felt inappropriate to run statistical analysis.

Logistic Regression

Considering the information above, two models were developed as the predictors for runaway behaviour as the runaway behaviour in British LAC, and UASC were significantly different. Each predictor is negatively associated with running away.

British Looked after Children Regression

49 of the 50 British LAC sample were used in the logistic regression as one individual had no information on at least one of the variables included in the model. The following risk factor variables were used in the logistic regression: Substance Misuse, History or Current Criminality and CAMHS Involvement, see Table 4.6. for the Binary Logistic regression N=49.

Table 4.6

British LAC Binary Logistic regression N=49.

Risk Factor Variable	**B**	**S.E.**	**Wald**	**df**	**Sig.**	**Exp (B)**
Substance Misuse	-1.170	0.801	**2.131**	**1**	**0.144**	**0.310**
Criminality	-1.142	0.761	**2.253**	**1**	**0.133**	**0.319**
CAMHS Support	-0.690	0.672	**1.055**	**1**	**0.304**	**0.502**

Testing the model against a constant was significant, χ^2 (df=3) = 10.491, p = 0.015, indicating that the risk predictors could distinguish between those who were likely to run away and those who would not. Nagelkerke's R^2 of 0.262 indicates that 26.2% of variability in the dependent variable is accounted for by the independent variables. Prediction success overall was 73.5%. See Table 4.7. for the classification table.

Table 4.7.

Classification of British LAC Cases

	Predicted

		Runaway		Percentage Correct
Observed		**No**	**Yes**	
Runaway	**No**	9	10	47.4%
	Yes	3	27	90.0%
Overall Percentage				73.5%

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children Regression

49 of the 57 UASC sample were used in the Logistic Regression as eight individuals had no information on at least one of the variables included in the model. The following risk factor variables were used in the Logistic Regression: Employment Status, Continent of Birth, Age Group, Age Assessed, History or Risk of Trafficking. see Table 4.8. for the Binary Logistic regression N=57.

Table 4.8.

UASC Binary Logistic regression N=57.

Risk Factor Variable	**B**	**S.E.**	**Wald**	**df**	**Sig.**	**Exp (B)**
Employment Status	-21.905	28420.807	**0.000**	**1**	**0.999**	**0.000**
Age Group	-1.185	0.832	**2.027**	**1**	**0.154**	**0.306**
Continent of Birth	-1.666	0.631	**6.961**	**1**	**0.008**	**0.189**
Trafficking Risk	-1.080	1.062	**1.033**	**1**	**0.309**	**0.340**
Age Assessment	-21.220	28420.807	**0.000**	**1**	**0.999**	**0.000**

Testing the model against a constant was significant, χ^2 (df=5) = 26.864, $p < 0.0001$, indicating that the risk predictors could distinguish between those who were likely to run away and those who would not. Nagelkerke's R^2 of 0.569 indicates that 56.9% of variability

in the dependent variable is accounted for by the independent variables. Prediction success overall was 79.6%, see Table 4.9 for the classification table.

Table 4.9.

Classification of UASC Cases

		Predicted Runaway		Percentage Correct
Observed		**No**	**Yes**	
Runaway	**No**	25	4	86.2%
	Yes	6	14	70.0%
Overall Percentage				79.6%

Practical Implication

At this point if we were to attempt to make a screening tool using the results from the Logistic Regression, taking into account that two would need to be made due to the heterogeneous nature of the sample Table 4.10 and 4.11 show the results for LAC.

Table 4.10.

risk factor significance within regression model and screening tool minimum and maximum score weighting LAC Sample

Risk Factor Variable	Significance	Min risk value*	Max risk value*
Substance misuse	**0.144**	1 (Yes)	2 (No)
Criminality	**0.133**	1 (Yes)	2 (No)
CAMHS Support	**0.304**	1 (Yes)	2 (No)

*sum to obtain total score on screening tool

The max score on the scoring tool was 16 and the minimum score was 3, a lower score indicates an increased likelihood of running away. Table 4.11 highlights the range of scores when the tool is reapplied to the 49 individuals with the necessary data. The area in the red highlights the scores that show the proportion of participants that are most likely to run away, the area in the green highlights the participants that are most likely not to run away and the area in the grey highlights the proportion of participants that the model cannot accurately account for. The table would suggest that scores of 4 and below are more likely to run away, scores of 6 are unlikely to run away and the model is currently unable to accurately predict what the remaining participants would do without further analysis. Looking at this model it can be considered that it is far too small to be considered an effective tool.

Table 4.11. The total score participants received on the screening tool and whether or not they ran away.

		Total Score				
		3	4	5	6	Total
Runaway	No	5	5	3	6	19
	Yes	15	12	3	0	30
Total participants		9	19	14	10	49
Proportion that runaway(%)		20	17	6	6	

If we were now to consider what this would look like for UASC, Table 4.12 and 4.13 highlight this. At this point we can see that whilst some progress has been made, there is still the need for further consideration of factors, and then once a model has been considered validation and reliability testing would need to be done.

Table 4.12.

risk factor significance within regression model and screening tool minimum and maximum score weighting UASC Sample

Risk Factor Variable	Significance	Min risk value*	Max risk value*
Employment Status	**0.999**	1 (NEET)	2 (Education/ Employment etc)
Age Group	**0.154**	1 (16)	2 (17+)
Continent of Birth	**0.008**	1 (Asia)	3 (Africa)
Trafficking Risk	**0.309**	1 (Yes)	2 (No)
Age Assessment	**0.999**	1 (Yes)	2 (No)

*sum to obtain total score on screening tool

The max score on the scoring tool was 10 and the minimum score was 6, a lower score indicates an increased likelihood of running away. Table 4.13 highlights the range of scores when the tool is reapplied to the 49 individuals with the necessary data. The area in the red highlights the scores that show the proportion of participants that are most likely to run away, the area in the green highlights the participants that are most likely not to run away and the area in the grey highlights the proportion of participants that the model cannot accurately account for. The table would suggest that scores of 7 and below are more likely to run away, scores of 9 and above are unlikely to run away and the model is currently unable to accurately predict what the remaining participants would do without further analysis. Looking at this model it can be considered that it also too small to be considered an effective tool.

Table 4.13.

The total score participants received on the screening tool and whether or not they ran away.

		Total Score					
		6	7	8	9	10	Total
Runaway	No	1	2	6	11	9	29
	Yes	4	9	6	1	0	20
Total participants		9	19	14	10	16	49
Proportion that runaway(%)		5	11	12	12	9	

Discussion

The research addressed two core hypotheses, 1) that there would be no differences in police response to reports of missing British LAC and reports of missing UASC. The results from this study suggested that this hypothesis cannot yet be answered. 2) That there would be no differences in the characteristics of young people who went missing between British LAC and UASC. This hypothesis was rejected as there were significant differences between the two sample.

Between Group Differences

Running away

British LAC that ran away were significantly more likely to have more repeated incidents, perhaps because they have a better grasp of the geographical location they have been placed, or have family and friends in the areas with whom they have split loyalty (Biehal and Wade, 2000). UASC Runaways were more likely to have more incidents of running away for longer than 48 hours, in these incidences they did not return to placement, it is considered that these young people are amongst those that were at risk of trafficking, or did not wish to be age assessed.

Number of Placements

Prior research has shown that children in care who have experienced multiple placements are more likely to have repeated runaway episodes (Nesmith, 2006 & Stefanidis, Pennbridge, MacKenzie and Pottharst, 1992). Specifically, Clark et al (2008) suggests an average of six placements. UASC of this sample's age would be less likely to have multiple placements as in many cases they have been in the country less than their British runaway counterparts, this is the case here when length of placement is taken into consideration.

Criminality

Runaway UASC, in order to escape adversity in their country of origin, sometimes experience the punitive or corrupt side of the police and points of authority (Thompson, Safyer and Pollio, 2001) therefore, to avoid detection, they are less likely to participate in criminality where they may face such authority again.

Substance Misuse

The moment a British LAC runaway is most likely to turn to substances is not clear (Thomas, Nafees and Bhugra, 2004). There is considerable evidence that runaway children are more extensive users of alcohol and drugs whilst missing, in comparison with their age comparisons in the general population (Thomas et al, 2004 & Kipke, Montgomery, Simon and Iverson, 1997 & Meltzer, Ford, Bebbington and Vostanis, 2012). The majority of the UASC sample in this study, were active practitioners of Islam. Therefore, it is hypothesised that most chose not to partake in activities that may cause intoxication which is forbidden. However, this is still an interesting result, as moving away from strict cultures influenced by religions such as Islam; a young person may be found to participate in behaviours that would otherwise be forbidden – such as substance use – should they be given the opportunity to do so. It is interesting that the young people in this sample appeared to choose not to, or it could

be that they had not be captured to do so by the provider as this would have implications to their placement, and peers.

Known Abuse (including neglect) and Sexual Exploitation

Runaway British LAC were reported to be more likely to experience abuse, including neglect, and more likely to be sexually exploited. Greene, Ennett and Ringwalt (1997) suggested that for those who have suffered victimisation, behaviours such as running away are not uncommon to alert carers that there is a problem or because they are feeling unsafe, regardless of whether the abuse was in the past or currently occurring. The moment a child runs away marks a crucial point for intervention, especially since findings in the current research, and other supporting research, would suggest that running away can lead to further high-risk outcomes (Alaggia, 2010). Linked to this, Kaufman and Widom, (1999) consider that those who have suffered sexual abuse are more likely to end up in prostitution with running away being the linking factor (Seng, 1989 & Silbert and Pines, 1981). It was expected that sexual exploitation would be a high-risk factor for UASC runaways, however as there were only two female runaways who ran away and never returned, it was not possible to explore this. CSE is a worry within running away samples, not only due to the possibility of leading the young person to prostitution but also the mental and health impacts (Saewyc, 2010). As previously mentioned, it was felt that this may have been underrepresented in the UASC sample as it was a majority male sample, and there may have been cultural pressures that made it difficult to disclose CSE.

Trafficking

Many UASC pay or negotiate with traffickers for safe voyage. When they reach their destination safely, they go missing once and do not tend to return (Beddoe, 2007). This can be because the events leading up to UASC eventual community placement following "rescue" can be traumatic or remnant of the treatment sustained when with their traffickers

(Soderlund, 2005), or because of the debt they feel is owed to their traffickers and may be taken from their families if they do not comply with any plans their traffickers may have for them (Bokhari, 2008).

Mental Health and Runaway Behaviour

Edelbrock (1980) found that in a study comparing 2,967 children referred for mental health support and 1300 non-referred children aged 4 to 16, the referred children ran away 5 to 30 times more frequently than those who had not been referred. This suggests that children struggling with mental health conditions were more likely to run away repeatedly, a result replicated here. The British LAC runaways were more likely to be supported by CAMHS and had more repeated incidents of running away than UASC runaways. Stanley (2007) suggested that the environment in which British LAC and UASC are living contribute heavily to their mental health difficulty, whether that be by exposure to abuse, substances, deprivation, placement disruption or the distress and disturbance of other young people. It was surprising that UASC runaways did not have a higher prevalence of mental health difficulty, considering the experiences faced whilst journeying to safety. It is possible that not wanting to cause retraumatisation, professionals and workers have refrained from asking about specific questions as the resource for a psychological specialist to do individual work is not available.

Within Group – British Looked after Children

Substance Misuse and Intervention

British LAC runaways were more likely to misuse legal and illegal substance than non-runaways, however, there were no significant differences between those who misused substances but had no intervention and LAC runaways who misused substances and had intervention. Interestingly, this is not necessarily a negative result as there are limited studies investigating what specific part of an intervention programme would effectively address the

issues a runaway young person who engages in substance misuse has (Thompson, 2005). It is therefore difficult to ascertain how these programs would be able to act as a protective factor and if it is them and not something else about the programme such as the substance misuse worker or carer that is acting as the protection. This result insinuates that the programmes were not affecting runaway behaviour.

Within Group – Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

Age assessment and Age

UASC who had been age assessed were significantly less likely to runaway than those who had not. Although there is limited research into the cause for this, it is hypothesised that this is due to wanting to avoid detection. When an age assessment takes place, the young person is formally documented. Recently the police force has begun taking palm prints alongside fingerprints, as these can be burnt off. If UASC avoids having their prints and details documented, they can move around easier, which if they have been trafficked would be beneficial. Alternatively, if a young person is older than they are attempting to appear, running away before an age assessment will increase their chances of not being deported.

Birth Continent

UASC born in Asia and The Middle East were most likely to run away. Those from Asia are primarily trafficked for the drug trade or prostitution (ECPAT UK Missing People, 2016). Those from the Middle East are not receiving refugee status or leave to remain as often as they did during the Iraq War or the War in Afghanistan, therefore a number of UASC from these countries are running away. Those from Africa such as The Sudan, Ethiopia and Eritrea are still war torn, therefore getting refugee status or leave to remain.

Strengths and Limitations

The main strength of this study was gaining insight into the runaway behaviour of British LAC and UASC populations from other dimensions in their lives, rather than focusing

heavily on just medical or psychiatric viewpoints (Wernesjö, 2012). This highlighted other areas where practitioners and carers can better support children. Using a cross sectional design was advantageous in investigating the association between running away and the characteristics of British LAC and UASC that do so, however as this design is conducted at one point in time it cannot deduce causality (Levin, 2006). As police responses were not accurately recorded, it was not possible to make any inferences; it would be interesting to see the result of this, given media responses to those seeking asylum. Unfortunately, as the sample was limited to one provider, the results cannot be generalised to all providers as they do not all follow the same protocol. This means that the significant results in this study may not reflect a true effect (Button et al, 2013).

Future Research

It would be beneficial to test the regression models with another dataset to see if the results match. Equally, more available variables may lead to a more accurate prediction model which will allow a screening tool to be developed in order to predict whether a child is likely to run away. This will reduce the increasing national numbers of missing young people if additional resources can be put in place for the young people at risk. This would also reduce the extensive resources spent in supporting missing persons cases (Home office, 2011), and better protect stigmatised group that is already vulnerable.

Conclusion

There were significant differences in circumstances when LAC and UASC were reported missing. It was not possible to ascertain differences in police responses. There were also different characteristics in the samples who were reported missing. Therefore, if a screening tool was developed to predict the risk of a young person running away, it would be important to ensure that there are two different screening tools. One for each sample because

based on the results of this study, if a British LAC screening tool was given to a high-risk UASC, they may not be flagged as a runaway risk and vice versa.

CHAPTER FIVE

IDENTIFYING FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH INCREASED RUNAWAY BEHAVIOUR AND RETURN TO CARE INTERVIEWS WITHIN A SAMPLE OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN SAMPLE OF RUNAWAYS

Identifying factors associated with increased Runaway behaviour and Return to Care Interviews within a Sample of Looked After Children Sample of Runaways

Abstract

This study aimed to identify the factors associated with increased runaway behaviour within a sample of 210 LAC runaways in England between 2017 and 2018, and whether return interviews were being conducted as statute. Chi-Square Statistics were conducted to see whether there were significant within and between group relationships with regards to: Runaway time, Number of missing episodes, reasons for running away documented, gender, Employment/Education, Placement type/number, age taken into care. Older children, being NEET, having more total placements, experiencing mental illness, alcohol difficulties and being at risk of trafficking were correlated with increased runaway incidences. The study also had a small sample of UASC who were qualitatively analysed separately due to literature suggesting that their runaway experiences were different.

Following this, the study identified if there were any factors contributing to the successful completion of a return to care interview following a runaway episode, such as: the length of time the runaway was missing and the reason the runaway was missing. The study found that return interviews only took place in 43.3% of cases. Positively, in the cases where return interviews were taking place these were within 72 hours in 78.5% of cases. Further, in the cases where the young person taken into care appeared to be due to Challenging behaviour or Risk of CSE, they were more likely to receive a return interview. Similarly, to the pilot study there was not enough data on the UASC sample to be able to quantitatively analyse the results, return interviews were conducted on only six occasions and four of those occasions were within 72 hours.

Identifying factors associated with increased Runaway behaviour and Return to Care Interviews within a Sample of Looked After Children Sample of Runaways

Running away is an area of research that is becoming more researched, with the US and UK being leaders in the research. Young people aged under 21 are the highest range of people to go missing, and within that approximately 35% are children running away from local authority care (The National Crime Agency UK Missing Persons Bureau, 2016). Although research has begun to make correlations and suggestions as to how to reduce increasing run-away rates for children, there is a significant lack of research looking at specifically children who run away from local authority care (Roe, 2000). This is a problem because children in care are three times more likely to run away than any other child (Children's Society, 2011), and yet since 2010, funding for local authorities has halved (Turner, 2019). In late 2018, £84 million was announced to be handed to 20 struggling local authorities with high or rising numbers of children in care (Puffet, 2018) this figure was criticised as not being enough, and subsequently in September 2019, The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced than an additional £1 billion would be given to adult and children's social care to support the rising demand (Her Majesty's Treasury, 2019). By October 2019, out of 50 spot checked local authorities only 10% predicted breakeven or underspending, whilst the rest were shutting non-vital services in order not to fall into bankruptcy (Turner, 2019). In short, although there is some slight increasing in resources since the cut of budgets, the demand on those resources is increasing quicker than the resources. This means that a number of services that would once support runaway children in care have been closed and nothing has taken their place (Turner, 2019). There has been a significant increase in children in care running away (Institute for Government, 2019), it is hypothesised that this is due in part that children once support by these care programmes no longer have access to

these programmes as there is no longer funding. Stuckler, Basu and McKee (2010) found that the maintenance of social welfare programmes in the UK are a key determinant of future population health. This has a knock-on effect on public services who pay a minimum of £1325.44 to £2415.80 for a medium risk runaway missing person case (Shalev-Greene and Pakes, 2013), children due to their age are viewed as high risk, children in care even more so due to the increased vulnerabilities such as being exploited or turning to crime and substance misuse (Department of Education, 2014), this means that the cost to public services is ever more increasing. We need to know the factors associated with increased runaway behaviour in order to better allocate government funding to children's services to support children at risk of running away. To be able to reduce the strain on public services such as the police, in terms of police time, and money when there are other more appropriate services that may be able to stop runaway behaviour before police involvement is necessary. Reducing risk factors would help to reducing runaway behaviour which in turn will allow for better outcome for already vulnerable young people. A large sample is important, as children in care is an umbrella term covering a lot of different types of children, and runaways are a heterogenous group, the larger the sample, the more representative which will allow for more correlations to be made, and for more voices to be captures within the data.

Furthermore, during this time there is danger of exploitation, criminality and/or other adversity (Rees, 2011), when in many cases young people have already experienced abuse, neglect or trauma to be brought to the attention of the local authority (The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Runaway and Missing Children and Adults and the All Party Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers, 2012). Therefore, it is vital that Safe and Well checks and Independent Return Interviews are conducted as stipulated when a young person is found or returns of their own volition to ensure that the

proper processes are put in place to safeguard vulnerable children. Return Interviews are defined by the Children's Society (2014) as 'an in-depth conversation that a trained professional has with a young person following a running away episode. It aims to establish what has caused the young person to run away, what experiences and individuals the young person encountered while away and what could help resolve the issues that the child identifies'. Return Interviews are so important because they have been shown to have an effective impact on identifying young people at risk of harm (Children's Society, 2014). The implication being that if the information learnt is used in an effective way then the services involved in safeguarding the young person will be able to reduce the potential of them going missing in the future via collaborative working, and therefore reduce the risk of harm. The Department of Education (2014) last statutory guidelines on children who run away or go from home or care was released in 2014 and highlights that there should be an agreed interagency working framework between the local authority, police and other agencies, including how they will respond. Specialised responses for specific young people at risk i.e., previously trafficked children. There should be agreed local authority reporting and recording systems on children missing and arrangements for information sharing between all agencies including external authorities when a child runs out of locality. Data should be analysed regularly, and there should be agreed safeguards for runaways and missing children to identify those at risk of significant harm, particularly looking at the length of the missing episode, frequency of running away, risk factors, family history of the child. However, despite the level of detail in this guidance; even at the time of publication there was evidence that safe and well checks and/or return interviews were not taking place. Reports about looked after children missing from their car placement were not routinely provided to senior managers in local authorities. This type of research is important right now as record number of young people in care are going missing, because they are unhappy, groomed for

exploitation due to increasing out of county placements, and/or in conflict/ isolated from family (The All-Party Parliament Group, 2019). Research opens up the discussion as to whether local authorities are following statutory guidelines. This can improve care for young people if highlighted, by ensuring that those who are not following guidelines are reminded to do so, with recommendations on how to do this efficiently given resource limitations. Also, it can show areas where the guidelines may not be effective and suggest ways in which it can be further improved during the next update.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study was to identify the factors associated with increased running away behaviour within a large sample of runaway LAC in order to suggest recommendations for future practice and research within the area, and to identify whether return to care interviews were being conducted as stipulated, those of which were highlighted within the background section of this study. Following this, the study was to identify if there were any factors contributing to the successful completion of a return to care interview following a runaway episode in the sample of looked after children such as: the length of time the runaway was missing and the reason the runaway was missing.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

For this study the following terms have been operationalised in the following way:

Child

The terms “child” or “children” equate to any person less than 18 years of age. “Young people” or “adolescents” may also apply.

Runaway

A child who has left home, placement or where they are supposed to be for whatever reason on at least one occasion.

Missing Child

A child reported as missing to the police by their family or carers.

In Care/Looked after Child

A child looked after by the Local authority is deemed to be in their care either with the agreement of their parents – Section 20 of the Children Act (known as "accommodated") or by order of the Court. A young person is normally looked after until they are 18, at which point they are classified as "former relevant" under the Children Leaving Care Act (2000). It may also refer to children who seek asylum in the country, who are not accompanied by an adult.

Return to Care Interview

A debrief interview with an independent worker. The interview is to ascertain where the child has been, their reasons for absconding and whether they were involved in or subject to any criminal activity whilst they were away. The debrief information should then be sent to the missing notification inbox with the police and health safeguarding box and other relevant agencies.

`Safe and Well Check

A check carried out by the police as soon as possible after a child reported missing has been found. The purpose is to check for any indications that the child has suffered harm, where and with whom they have been, and to give them an opportunity to disclose any offending by or against them.

Risk of Serious Harm

A risk which is life threatening and/or traumatic, and from which recovery, whether physical or psychological, can be expected to be difficult or impossible.

Sexual Exploitation

Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, threatening or profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.

Trafficking

Recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power, of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs

Full Care Order

A full care order, under section 31 of the Children Act 1989. This means the local authority holds much more responsibility and the parent loses more of their rights to make decisions for the child

Section 20

Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 is how a Local Authority can provide accommodation for a child within their area if that child is in need of it, due to the child being lost/abandoned or there is no person with parental responsibility for that child. Anyone with parental responsibility can voluntarily allow the Local Authority to accommodate their child under section 20 of the Children Act 1989.

Police Protection in Local Authority Care

This is when the Police; attending to a situation; are not happy with the situation that a child is in and decide to take the child into protection. The Child is then handed over to the

Local Authority for emergency placement usually prior to an assessment on whether a court order or section is appropriate.

METHOD

Research design

The study is an observational cross section design, looking at exploring the relationships between factors, and the descriptives. The study also utilises a descriptive and explorative design to study the circumstances around whether return to care interviews were conducted after each runaway episode. Due to the age and nature of the sample, it can be difficult to access such data, therefore limited research has been done on this topic. It is acknowledged that this is not as statistically powerful as other research designs, and this will be explored further in the limitations section.

Sample

The sample was a set of 210 young people from the local authority LAC Team database between the years 2017 and 2018. The population was a mix of females and males and aged between 13-19. With regards to reviewing the return interviews, the same 210 young people were reviewed, however it was specifically the 1016 missing episodes relating to the number of missing incidents per individual, the hours the individual was missing for in each incident, whether a return interview was conducted, whether it was conducted within 72 hours and the reason for each individual missing episode if known.

Ethics

Favourable Opinion was received from the University of Nottingham, and further approval was received from the Children's Services Director of Safeguarding for the Local Authority.

Instrument

As the researcher was not able to collect this data in person, or able to see the database with all of the data, but rather had to select a time period and age range for analyse. An instrument was developed, using the data required for the study in Chapter 4, in order to assist to direct the local authority deliver the data required for the study.

Data collection

It was not possible to collect this data in person due to the scale of the data required and the time available to complete the collection, which would need to factor in the time needed to get the required security clearance to work as an external researcher with vulnerable young people. The potential to retraumatise young people who have been through adversity by asking triggering questions and are not supported psychologically due to service cuts. Consent issues primarily in the case of young people who do not have English as a first language, or access to Language Line and/or an interpreter. The data was received in an excel database form following the request for all missing episodes between 2017 and 2018; including young people aged 11-18.

Data analysis Plan

The data was analysed using the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) statistics 26 for windows. Frequencies, normal distributions, and frequencies were completed for all variables. The Shapiro-Wilk test was used to test normality due to there being less than 2000 data entries, all of these were significant therefore the data was not normally distributed, and non-parametric tests were conducted.

Chi-Square Statistics were conducted to see whether there were significant within and between group relationships with regards to: Runaway time, Number of missing episodes, reasons for running away documented, gender, Employment/Education, Placement type/number, age taken into care. With regards to the return interviews Chi-Square Statistics were conducted to see whether there were significant within and between group relationships

with regards to: Runaway time, runaway interviews conducted after 72 hours, and reasons for running away documented. Chi-Square statistics were used to similar reasons has highlighted in chapter 4 page 104.

Due to the conclusions from the first study, those with the reason for intervention being an UASC were removed from the analysis and were discussed qualitatively afterwards. This is because we have previously seen that this group is heterogeneous.

RESULTS

Demographical information Prior to Analysis

Table 5.1 presents the individual demographical information pertinent to this study. There was a close split in gender, slightly more male adolescents (53.1%). The majority were born in England (72.1%) and at the time of the sample collection were aged 17 years (22.0%) or 18 years (23.9%) of age. The total sample number was 209 adolescents.

Table 5.1. Descriptive Characteristics of Adolescent Participants (N=209)

Characteristic	f	%
Age		
0	1	0.5
7	1	0.5
8	1	0.5
10	1	0.5
11	5	2.4
12	5	2.4
13	11	5.3
14	17	8.1
15	23	11.0

	16	29	13.9
	17	46	22.0
	18	50	23.9
	19	19	9.1
Gender			
	Male	111	53.1
	Female	98	46.9
Country Born			
	Afghanistan	5	2.6
	Albania	1	0.5
	British	28	14.7
	England	137	72.1
	Eritrea	3	1.6
	Jamaica	1	0.5
	Latvia	3	1.6
	Poland	2	1.1
	Portugal	1	0.5
	Republic of Ireland	1	0.5
	Romania	1	0.5
	Saint Vincent and Grenadines	1	0.5
	South Africa	1	0.5
	Vietnam	5	2.6

Table 5.2 presents information regarding to the current and historical Local Authority Care of the sample. There were more adolescents on a Full Care Order (50.7%) than any other Care Section. The majority were taken into care when they were 16 years of age (18.2%) and had a total of 2 placements during their time so far in care (18.2%). The most common reason for being taken into care was due to dysfunctions in the family (32.5%) and most of the sample were currently placed in Foster homes (28.7%).

Table 5.2. Care information of Adolescent Participants (N=209)

Characteristic	f	%
Care Section		
Section 20	82	39.2
Full Care Order	106	50.7
Interim Care Order	19	9.1
Police Protection	2	1.0
Age brought into Care		
9 Years and Younger	32	15.3
10 Years	12	5.7
11 Years	15	7.2
12 Years	16	7.7
13 Years	26	12.4
14 Years	27	12.9
15 Years	29	13.9
16 Years	38	18.2
17 Years	14	6.7
Total Number of Placements		
1	21	10.0

2	38	18.2
3	27	12.9
4	27	12.9
5	16	7.7
6	19	9.1
7	8	3.8
8	21	10.0
9	11	5.3
10	6	2.9
11+	15	7.2
Reason for being taken into care		
Family Dysfunction	142	67.9
Risk of Sexual Exploitation	9	4.3
Challenging Behaviour	16	7.7
Unaccompanied Asylum- Seeking Child	13	6.2
Other	29	13.9
Current Placement Type		
Independent Living	59	28.2
Children's Home	74	35.4
Foster Placement	60	28.7
Other Residential	3	1.4
Residential Care Home	8	3.8
Other	5	2.4

Table 5.3 presents information regarding experiences or risks that the sample may be exposed to. Of those that were of statutory schooling age the majority were not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) (32.7%). Most adolescents were not at risk of sexual exploitation (95.7%) or trafficking (81.8%) and did not misuse drugs (75.6%) or alcohol (77.5%). The majority did not experience mental health difficulty (85.2%).

Table 5.3. Care information of Adolescent Participants (N=209)

Characteristic	f	%
Education/Employment/Training	**49**	**100**
Education	16	32.7
Employment	7	14.3
NEET	21	42.9
Other	5	10.2
Risk of Sexual Exploitation		
Yes	9	4.3
No	200	95.7
Risk of Trafficking		
Yes	38	18.2
No	171	81.8
Drug Abuse		
Yes	51	24.4
No	158	75.6
Alcohol Abuse		
Yes	47	22.5
No	162	77.5
Mental Illness		

Yes	31	14.8
No	178	85.2

Table 5.4 presents information regarding the runaway experiences of the sample. This refers to the number of runaway episodes each adolescent had; the majority only having one (45.5%) The total length of time they were missing over the course of the year, which ranged from to 12 minutes to 77 days, 1 hour and 42 minutes. There were a couple of entries in which a young person was reported to be missing for zero minutes, sometimes a child is officially reported missing but then the episode is closed if the police review it as inappropriate, or at times a young person is reported missing and then turns up and therefore the report is cancelled and marked as reported but for zero minutes. Also, the reasons they were reported to have gone missing, which was mostly to have contact with friends (40.3%) taken from chapter 6.

Table 5.4. Descriptive Characteristics of Runaway Episodes (N=1016)

Characteristic	F	%
Number of missing episodes		
1	95	45.5
2	21	10.0
3	16	7.7
4	15	7.2
5	13	6.2
6	10	4.8
7	1	0.5
8	5	2.4
9	2	1.0

10	3	1.4
11	5	2.4
12	1	0.5
13	3	1.4
15	3	1.4
16	2	1.0
17	1	0.5
18	1	0.5
20	1	0.5
22	1	0.5
23	3	1.4
25	1	1.0
35	1	0.5
37	1	0.5
38	1	0.5
45	1	0.5
58	1	0.5

Reason for Runaway Episode

Abuse in Foster Home	2	0.2
Contact with Family	59	7.4
Contact with Friends	323	40.3
Domestic Violence	4	0.5
Offending Behaviour	4	0.5
Parent/Carer Abuse	5	0.6

Reason known not recorded	72	9.0
Reason Unknown	318	39.7
Substance misuse	7	0.9
Suspected Sexual Exploitation	8	1.0

Table 5.5 presents return interview demographical information for the young person. This encompasses: the number of return interviews (N=439), the number of those return interviews within 72 hours (78.1%).

Table 5.5. Descriptive Characteristics of Return Interviews (N=439)

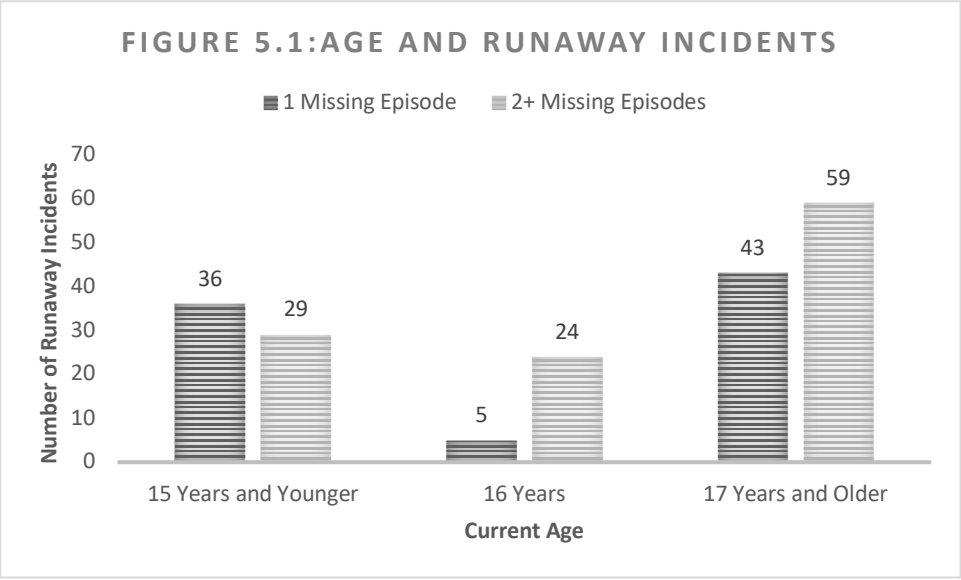
Characteristic	F	%
Runaway Interview		
Yes	439	54.9
No	360	45.1
Runaway Interview Within 72 hours		
Yes	343	80.5
No	83	19.5

Chi Square Analysis on Characteristics of Runaway Behaviour

Chi square statistics were conducted to determine whether the demographical information, or descriptive characteristics had significant relationships in relation to increased runaway behaviour. During the analysis in order to meet the expected cell count assumption for the Chi Square analysis, some of the variables were recoded into more concise variables.

Demographical Information VS increased missing episodes

When considering whether gender had an impact on the number of times an adolescent went missing the analysis came back as non-significant, X2 (1), N = 169) = .206, p < .650. this would suggest that gender did not have an impact on the number of times an adolescent went missing. Therefore, further analysis is not split by gender. Nationality was found also to be non-significant. However, the chi-square assumptions were violated as more than 75% of cells had an expected count less than five, therefore this analysis is not accurate. it must be considered that there was not a wide spread of participants from other nationalities as seen in table one, this is the cause for the violation. For this analysis the data was recoded into UK & Northern Ireland, Middle East and Asia, Africa and Caribbean, and Europe. It was not further condensed as research has already proved that nationalities within looked after care are not homogenous groups and have different needs with regards to runaway data. Current age at the time the database was handed to the researcher was found to have an impact on increased runaway behaviour, which fits in with current literature, X2 (2), N = 196) = 11.956, p < .003. Older adolescents had higher runaway incidents and frequency. Figure 5.1 shows this information clearly.



Care Information VS Increased missing episodes

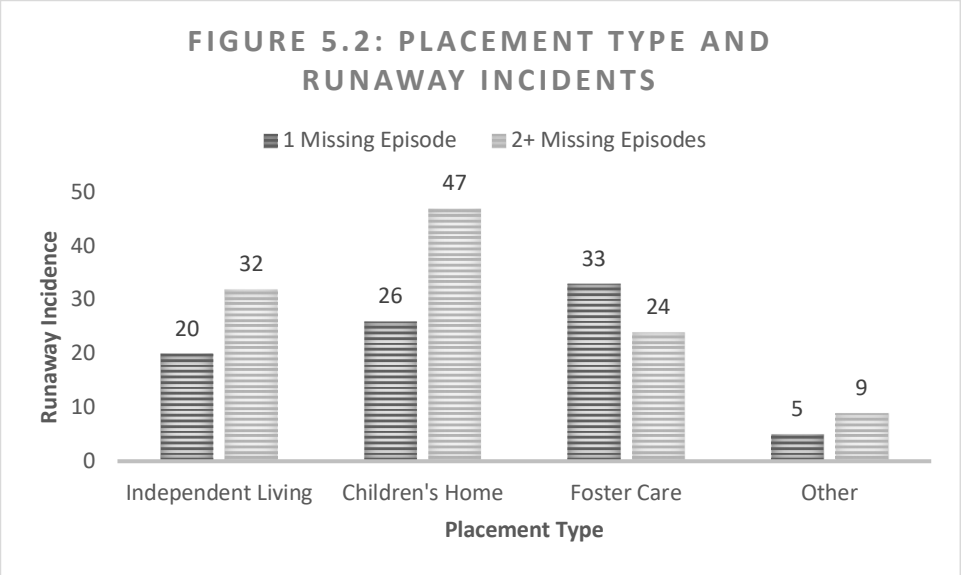
When considering whether care section had an impact on the number of times an adolescent went missing the analysis came back as non-significant, X2 (2), N = 196) = .542, p < .762. this would suggest that care section did not have an impact on the number of times an adolescent went missing. Similarly, the age an adolescent first came into the care of the local authority was non-significant; X2 (2), N = 196) = .316, p < .854, suggesting that there is not a relationship between increased running incidents and age of first care contact. The reason that an adolescent was taken into care was also found to be non-significant, X2 (3), N = 196) = 1.392, p < .708.

Educational Status VS Increased missing episodes

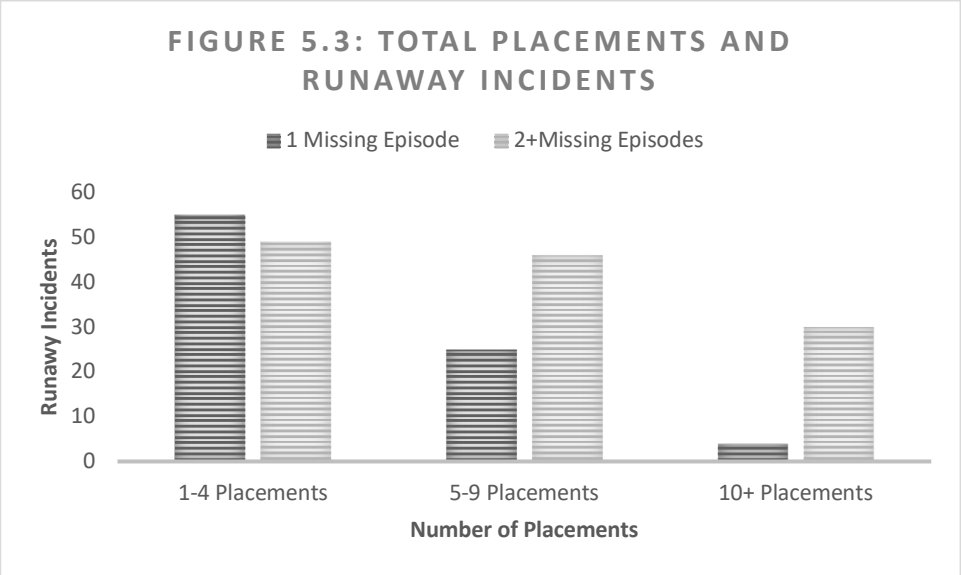
When looking at whether the adolescent of schooling age was in employment, education or training had an impact on missing episodes, the relationship was found to significantly correlate with increased missing episodes, X2 (3), N = 45) = 8.951, p < .030. this suggests that adolescents that were not in education, employment or training were more likely to have increased missing episodes.

Placement Information VS Increased missing episodes

The type of placement that an adolescent was currently placed in was found to be non-significant, X2 (3), N = 196) = 7.528, p < .057. Those in the other category included adolescents in secure settings and youth offending institutes. Figure 5.2 demonstrates the breakdown of this information in a visual form.



Similarly, the total number of placements an adolescent had was significant found to correlate with increased missing episodes, X2 (2), N = 196) = 10.826, p < .004. Those with more placements tended to have repeated runaway incidents. Figure 5.3 demonstrates the breakdown of this information in a visual form.



Adversity VS Increased Missing Episodes

Risk of Child Sexual Exploitation, X2 (1), N = 196) = 1.734, p < .188; and Drug Misuse, X2 (1), N = 196) = 1.610, p < .204, were found to be non-significant with regards to increased missing episodes. Whereas, experience of mental illness, X2 (1), N = 196) = 7.557, p < .006, Alcohol Misuse, X2 (1), N = 196) = 8.808, p < .003, and Risk of Trafficking, X2

(1), N = 196) = 9.151, p < .002. were found to be significantly associated with increased runaway behaviour.

Chi Square Analysis on Return Interviews

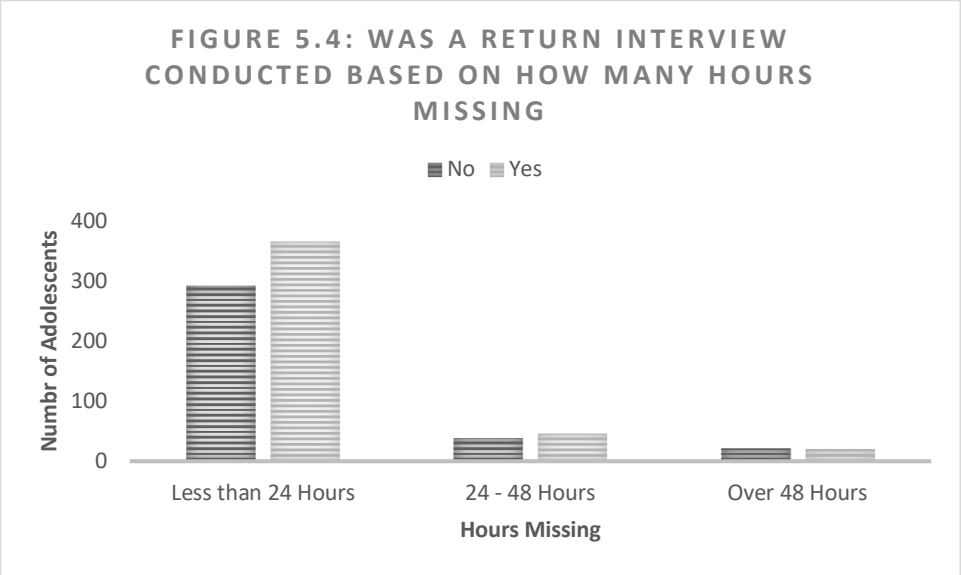
Chi square statistics were conducted to determine whether the demographical information, or descriptive characteristics had significant relationships in relation to whether or not Return Interviews were conducted as stipulated. This was conducted on the runaway incidents not related to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (n=999)

Return interview VS Return interview within 72 hours

433 Return Interviews were recorded to have been conducted within the sample, and 340 of those within 72 hours. There was not a significant relationship suggesting that the length of a missing episode impacted whether a return interview would be conducted within 72 hours; X2 (2, N = 420) = 1.007, p < .604. Similarly, there was not a significant relationship suggesting that the reason that an adolescent was missing impacted whether or not a return interview was conducted within the 72-hour guideline; X2 (5, N = 420) = 3.707, p < .592.

Whether a Return Interview was Conducted VS Runaway Episode Length

When considering whether the likelihood of a Return Interview taking place had a relationship with the length of time that an adolescent was missing the analysis came back as non-significant, X2 (2, N = 787) = 1.049, p < .592. This would suggest that the length of time did not factor into whether or not a Return Interview was conducted. This can be clearly seen in Figure 6.4 in which the bars are similarly placed.



This will be explored further in the discussion, however as a preliminary thought, this could be due to Return Interviews being more concerned with whether the adolescent was at risk of harm, rather than how long they were missing. When changing the question slightly and looking at was a return interview conducted with more repeated runaway incidents, there was a significant correlation between increased runaway incident and increased conduction of independent return interviews; $X2\ (2, N = 182) = 83.834$, $p < .000$.

Whether a Return Interview was Conducted VS Reason for Running

In order to reduce the chances of cells with less than 5 cases, the reasons for running ascertained in the Return Interviews were condensed into 6 categories which are as follows: Abuse (Domestic violence, parent/carer abuse and foster care abuse), Reasons Unknown, Contact with Friends (Have or Avoid), Contact with Family (Have or Avoid), Antisocial Behaviour (Substance Misuse, Offending Behaviour and Suspected Sexual Exploitation) and Reasons known but not Recorded.

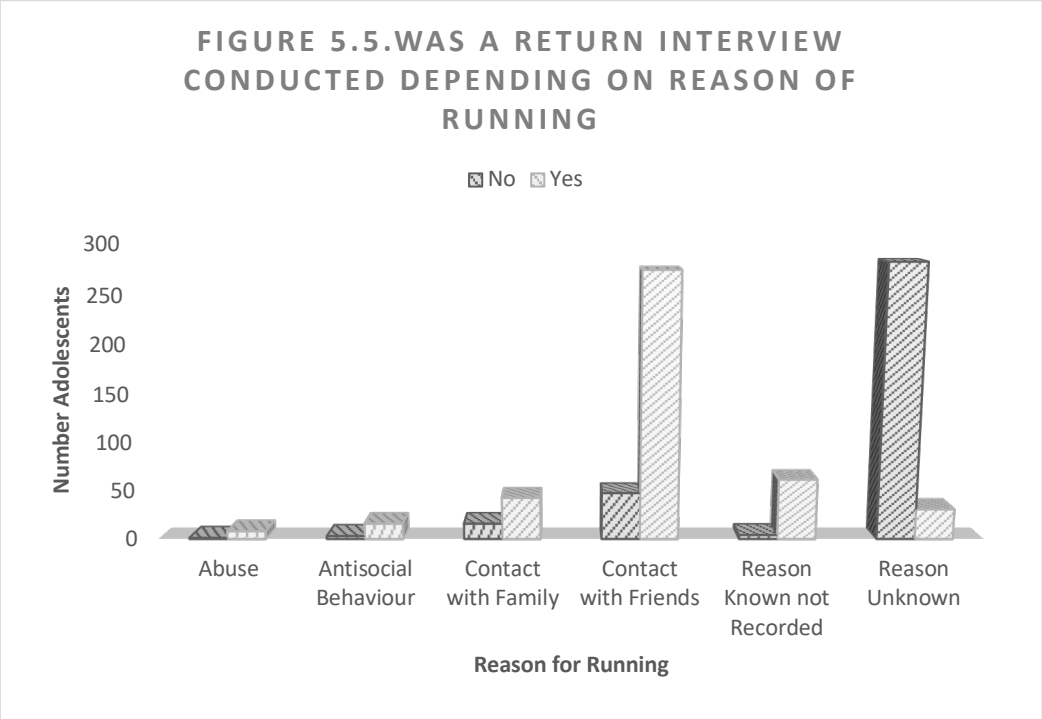
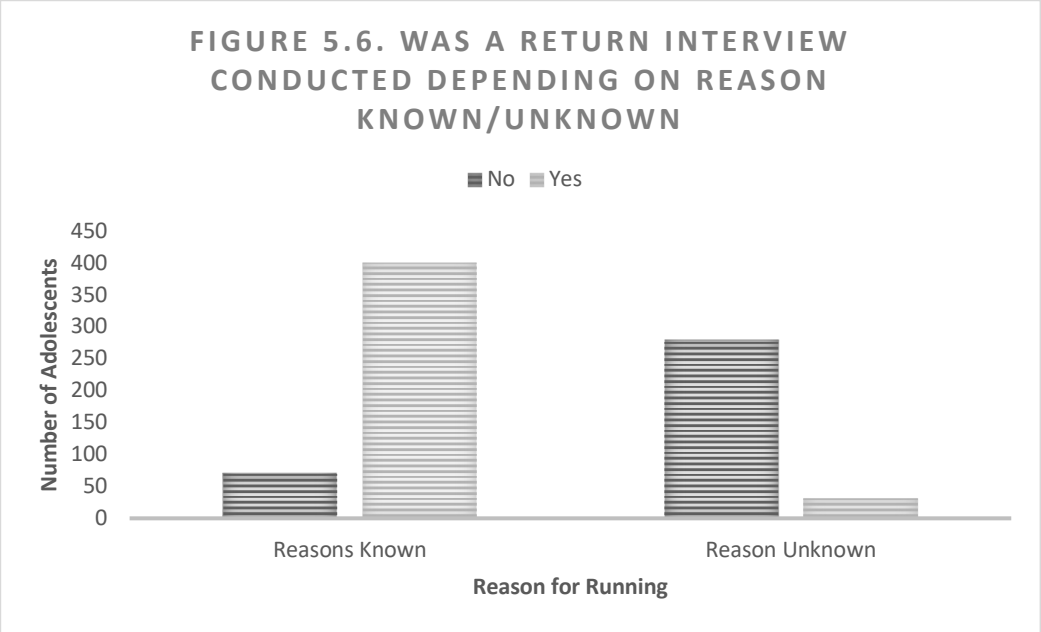


Figure 5.5 shows a visual representation of the results of this chi square analysis. When the reasons for the runaway episode were unknown there was less likely to be a Return Interview conducted, however in this case despite the high significance, the Chi-square value was high, $X2\ (5, N = 786) = 432.029$, $p < .000$. This would suggest that there was no relationship between the variables. Also, despite condensing the variables there were still cells with less than 5 counts in the cells, therefore the analysis was rerun with a 2 x 2 chi square table, Figure 5.6 shows the results of this.



When looking at the relationship between whether a Return Interview was completed and the reason for running was known or unknown, the results were highly significant, X2 (1, N = 786) = 426.341, p < .000, suggesting that when the reason was known a Return Interview was conducted, however the Chi Square value continues to be large suggesting that the variables are not related. This may be because in isolated runaway incidents the reason for running away may not be known until after the Interview had been conducted if it was.

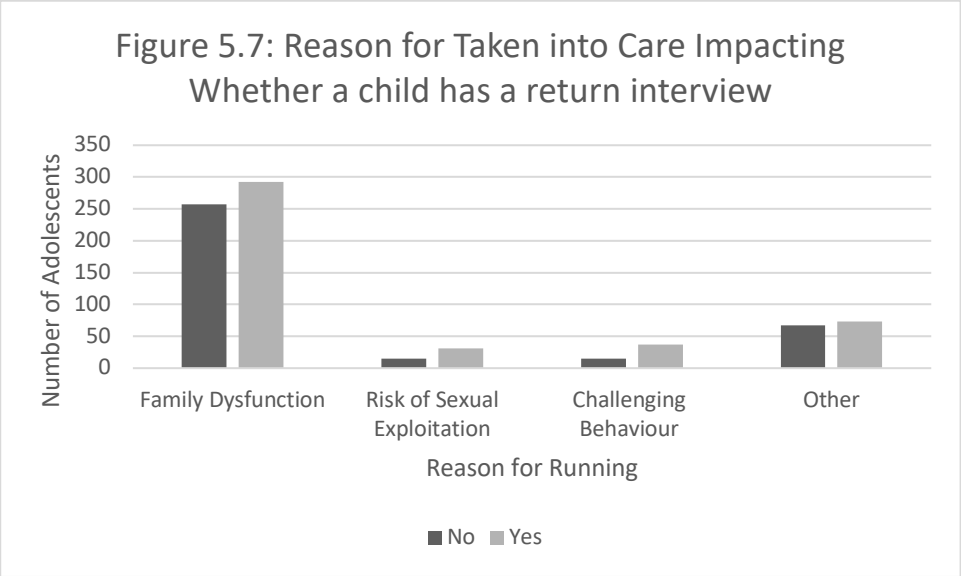
Runaway Episode Length VS Reason for Running

To see if the reason for running had a relationship with the length of time that an adolescent was missing, Chi square analysis was conducted to look at the relationship between the two, this was found to be non-significant when looking at a 2 x 2 table when the reason was simply known or not know, X2 (2, N = 790) = 0.485, p < .785. When expanding the reasons for running into the categories used in figure 6, there continued to be a non-significant result, X2 (10, N = 790) = 11.959, p < .288.

Reason for taken into care VS Return Interview

When looking at isolated runaway incidents and the reason that the young person of the incident was taken into care, and whether or not they received a return interview, there

appeared to be a significant result. X2 (3, N = 787) = 9.527, p < .0.23. Those at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation and those with challenging behaviour were more likely to receive a return interview when they ran away than others, in which it seemed variable, Figure 5.7 shows the breakdown.



Qualitative Analysis of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

Within the sample marked as Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking children, they count for 13 of the original 209. 12 male (92.3%) and one female. Four of which were of schooling age and all were in education except one who was actively seeking. All became Looked after Children between 13 – 17 years of age and were all cared for under a Section 20.

With regards to the adversity experienced by these adolescents. Only one experienced difficulty with their mental health and also experienced difficulty with alcohol, no adolescents were trafficking risks, or had drug issues. Three young people were at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation. Table 5.6 shows the number of placements, the current placement types and the nationality of the young people.

Table 5.6. Descriptive Characteristics of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (N=13)

Characteristic	f	%
Number of Placements		
1	2	15.4
2	5	38.5
3	1	7.7
4	1	7.7
5	1	7.7
6	1	7.7
8	1	7.7
9	1	7.7
Current Placement Types		
Independent Living	7	53.8
Children's Home	1	7.7
Foster Placement	3	23.1
Whereabouts Unknown	2	15.4
Nationality	**10**	**100**
Eritrea	2	20
Afghanistan	4	40
Albania	1	10
Vietnam	3	30
Total Number of Missing Episodes		
1	11	84.6
2	1	7.7

3	1	7.7

Two young Vietnamese young people were reported to be at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation, one male and one female, they also had one missing episode and their whereabouts were unknown by the local authority. A third male Vietnamese adolescent was also reported to be at risk of CSE, who lived in Independent living and had been reported as missing once.

Return Interviews

There are 13 adolescents marked as UASC within this sample. In the return interview section, there were 17 runaway incidents relating to these 13 adolescents, and a mean of 5 days missing, however this is due to one adolescent outlier being missing for 96 days and increasing the mean for the rest of the sample, who were missing less than 24 hours in the majority of cases (64.7%). Again, similar to the smaller sample, accurate reporting was not kept and there were five missing records relating to these 17 missing episodes. Return interviews were conducted on six occasions and within 72 hours in four of those six cases. In only two of those six return interviews was the reason for the missing episode recorded, which was to have or avoid contact with friends.

DISCUSSION

Demographic Summary

This study did not find a significant correlation between Gender or nationality and increased runaway behaviour. Sanchez, Waller and Greene (2016) claim that this is because of sample biases and inconsistent operationalisation of terms such as runaway and missing

children. Although there are some inconsistencies, most studies find that females runaway more than males. In their study they claimed that shelters were more likely to have males, and therefore perhaps females were staying in locations not on the response option. However, this study found that even when there was not a set number of possible responses, there still was not a gendered significance. A result also found by Hammer, Finkelhor and Sedlack (2002) in National Household Survey, who found that in a sample of 1682900 young people there was an even split of runaways. There is still an inability to explain the variability of results, which just demonstrates the heterogeneity of runaway and missing children. It is difficult to ascertain whether the difference is due to this sample being children in care or due to the sampling method. Introducing data from further local authorities would help to gain more of an idea. This study concurred with current literature that older young people were more likely to have increased runaway episodes (Finkelhor and Sedlack, 2002; Sanchez, Waller and Greene, 2016). This may be because as the young person gets older, they are encouraged to have more autonomy and wish to make their own decisions in terms of what their do and who they do and do not have contact with, regardless of best interest and the plans of the local authority.

Care Summary

The reasons and age in which a child came into care were found not to be significantly correlated to increased runaway episodes. To some of extent this was an expected result, there are a number of factors that can influence a young person in care across their lifespan, such as contact, placements, sections. Regardless a young person is more likely to run away at an older age when they have more autonomy to make decisions. Also, it is difficult to ascertain more of a link between age of coming into care and runaway behaviour as we do not have the data of how each child's runaway incidents spread across their time in care. With this information more advances statistics could be done to see how incidents

spread out for each child across their age. Equally, because there are so many factors impacting a child in care, why they first come into the care of the Local Authority may have nothing to do with the reason they run away.

Man (2000) found that non-runaways scored lower on truancy and school performance than runaways, and that run away behaviour was positively correlated to increased runaway behaviour, another duplicated result in this study. Historical research by Rogers, Segal and Graham (1994) would concur with this, they suggested that in most cases young people experience difficulty with academics prior to running away, or these difficulties may even be the cause of running away. Once a young person has begun to run away, this adds further disruption to their education which may add further stress to their anxiety about academics; or may make getting an education difficult if they continue to miss significant amounts of work.

Literature has shown that the instability of placements, such as having multiple placements is positively related to increased runaway behaviour (Lin, 2012) and This study duplicated this result. A reason for this is that placement instability can be caused by issues within the placements, emergency placement usage, social service issues such as court orders or kindship. Placement changes can lead to further disruptive behaviour and disruptive behaviour is a risk factor in young people who runaway the more placement disruptions and changes, the more problem behaviours and runaway behaviours in the young person (Clark et al, 2008). Interestingly, previously research has also suggested that the type of placement such as foster care, and children homes would show a difference in their runaway behaviours (Lin, 2012) however this was not the case in this study. It is possible that this is because the breakdown of different placement types was not evenly spread, and unlike other studies there was not rich data about the experiences of young people within these placements, whereas

Lin (2012) found that particularly it was boundaries within foster homes and peer pressure, lack of individualised care in children homes that caused increased runaway behaviours.

Adversity

CSE has long been a high risk of young people who go missing or runaway. Therefore, it was unusual that this study, given the large sample found this risk factor to be non-significantly related to increased runaway behaviour. As those who are missing more often, can be suspected of being sexually exploited, to survive (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). In a review by Whitbeck et al (2001) they highlighted a number of studies in which sexual exploitation was high risk of young people who ran away. There was only one study by Kiple et al (1997) that found 15% of their sample were sexually exploited. This highlights that while this study produced a non-significant result, in actuality, CSE is a significant risk factor, but as will be discussed in the limitations, whether or not a particular sample will display significant results depends on the method of sampling and the population represented within that sample.

While CSE was found not to be significant, trafficking was found to be significantly related to increased runaway behaviour. Initially this was found to be unusual as CSE and trafficking are linked (Rigby, Malloch and Hamilton-Smith, 2012). However, whilst both male and female children aged 16-18 are the largest identified group of child victims, while females are trafficked for sexual exploitation, males are trafficked for labour exploitation (Rigby, Malloch and Hamilton-Smith, 2012) which could suggest why this was still significant, since there were not many young people with risk of CSE. In 2017, it was found that 24% of all identified or suspected victims of trafficking went missing from care and that, child trafficking victims went missing on average 7.2 times (Baker and Hunter, 2018) this could also explain why there was a significant result.

Previous research has suggested that runaway children and those reported missing are at risk of mental illness. Particularly both internalised and externalised disorders such as PTSD, Anxiety, Depression, Conduct Disorder and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) (Cauce et al, 2000). This result was also found significant in this study, however interestingly, no information was available regarding the types of mental illness, which Cauce et al (2000) highlighted has been a limitation in runaway and missing research. Further, due to not finding a gender difference, it was not possible to see whether there was a difference in the mental difficulties experienced by the sample, as Cauce et al (200) found that males were more externalising, and females were more internalising. Historically, it has been recognised that due to socialisation pressures males are more likely to be assertive or aggressive, than females who may be self-effacing and evaluating (Gjerde, Block and Block, 1988). More recently, twin studies have also found that in twins demonstrating emotional/depressive or antisocial/conduct problems, internalisation was higher in females, and externalisation was higher in males and that as the child grew older, internalisation in the females, and externalisation in the male increased (Pesenti-Gritti et al, 2008). This is so significant because it means that when it comes to intervention with children in care that already have complex backgrounds, the approach used would be different from male to female. Particularly difficult to recommend in this study as a gender significance was not found, despite a relatively even gender spread.

There is plenty of research to suggest that both drug and alcohol misuse has a relationship with runaway behaviour (Thompson, Zittel-Palamara and Maccio, 2004; Jeanis, Fox and Muniz, 2018). However, during this study it was found that whilst alcohol was significantly correlated, drug misuse was not. This result was also found in Meltzer, Ford, Bebbington and Vostanis (2012) study of 7461 respondents. Similarly, both this study and Meltzer et al (2012) consider that this result may be due to the representation of young people in the

dataset. The young people are from one local authority, and that local authority does not have easy access to Class A drugs that may be more easily accessible in larger cities. Further, Windle (1988) highlighted that repeat runaways did engage in more substance misuse than once runaways, however there were gender differences. Females were more likely to misuse drugs and males were more likely to abuse alcohol. Unfortunately, as gender differences were not observed here this study was not able to see further than alcohol use was correlated with repeat runaways.

Runaway reasons impacting Runaway Interview

It was found that if the reason that the young person was reported missing was known, then there was more likely to be a return interview. However, the Chi-Square value was large, again suggesting that the variables were not related. This is suspected to be the case because the reason for running away is likely to be found out after the young person has runaway or during the return interview. When the young person is reported missing, the information given may only be a suspected reason. It is very important to know the reason for running away because it indicates that the child may be at risk of harm, experiencing conflict with parents or carers; family breakdown or poor relationships; experiences of abuse and neglect; or problems at school (Rees, 2011). Furthermore, running away has a consequence of involvement in county lines, criminality, gangs, prostitutions, Sexual Exploitation and sleeping rough (The Children's Society, 2014). The use of return interviews, allows identification of the reasons for running away which will allow for resolution in those issues and a reduction in harm (The Children's Society, 2014)

Length of time impacting Runaway interview

It was found that the length of time that a young runaway was away did not correlate with whether or not a return interview was offered or went ahead. It was previously considered

that this could be due to Return Interviews being concerned with what took place during the missing episode and assessing risk of further episodes, rather than how long they were missing. It is also considered that it could be in the case of adolescents that are missing for long periods of time, a strategy would have been developed by the professionals involved in the young person's case (Department of Education, 2014). Therefore, when they return to placement a return interview may not be conducted. It is difficult to ascertain why exactly such a result was produced as previous studies focus on the importance of return interviews when there are repeated runaway incidents, rather than the length of the incidents themselves. Positively, this study replicated those results that when there were more runaway incidents, the young people were likely to receive more independent return interviews. This suggests that although the local authority is not currently able to hit top compliance figures, it is actively trying to safeguard the children in care.

Reason for Taken into Care Impacting runaway Interview

Those at risk of CSE and those with challenging behaviour were more likely to receive a return interview when they ran away than others. This result was expected because evidence has suggested that young people at risk of CSE or prostituting to keep surviving whilst on the streets; or those with challenging behaviour including criminality may turn to drug dealing or misusing will require more intensive support (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). Further, more timely return interviews and putting in strategies can effectively reduce runaway behaviour by up to two thirds and has previously achieved a 21% reduction in runaway arrests according to the ASTRA project (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002).

It was unusual that Family Dysfunction did not suggest any correlation, however it is accepted that this term was made of a number of variables in order to meet the Chi Square assumptions. Within this included: Abuse and Neglect, Drug taking parents, alcohol taking parents, parents with mental health difficulty, family in acute distress, family in chronic

distress, single parent household, family dysfunction. Perhaps should these have been further split more results would have been generated because those living in stepfamilies are three times more likely to run away, those living in single parent households are two times more likely to run away; and those who have been abused, neglected or with a parent with drug, alcohol or mental health difficulties also have increased chances of running away (The Children's Society, 2011). We have also learnt that those with repeated run-away episodes should according to statutory guidelines (2014) have access to more support from public services.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

There were not enough unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking children to make statistical analysis. However, looking at the results, we can see that most UASC ran away once, and most UASC were in education of some sort, we have previously ascertained that being in education, employment or training reduces the likelihood of repeated runaway incidents (Man, 2000). There was one female UASC who was also reported to be at risk of CSE, unusually there were two male UASC who were reported to be at risk of CSE. Rigby, Malloch and Hamilton-Smith (2012) highlighted that usually males were trafficked for labour and females for sexual exploitation. However, none of these young people were believed or suspected to be at risk of trafficking and Whitbeck et al (2001) did mention that CSE was a high risk for males as well as females who run. The two highest nationality of UASC were Vietnamese young people and Afghani young people, according to the (Baker and Hunter, 2018) these two countries are in the top five nationalities of unaccompanied children, and children identified or suspected as being trafficked. Therefore, although statistical analysis could not be conducted, we are still seeing visual results that are in line with current literature.

This is the second study conducted by this research that has suggested, although not statistically confirmed, that Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children are less likely to receive a return interview than other vulnerable young people. Despite also being included under the bracket of Looked after Children. Westwood (2012) highlighted that the perceptions of the risks that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are exposed to was understood and responded differently by Police and social workers, which may contribute to why data is inconsistent, if different agencies feel it prudent to record different elements of information case by case. Further, Westwood (2012) felt that particularly during their interviews with the police the police, sweeping statements and cultural stereotypes were made with regards to Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children. There was also a lack of acceptance that a child's country of origin was important in understanding how to safeguard them. Compiled with their first point, and the issue here of missing data and less return interviews, it would seem that there is some sort of cultural biases that impact on risk assessment meaning that Unaccompanied Asylum seekers are not offered Return Interviews as often as other Looked after Children. During the 'Brexit' campaign, there was a surge in racial hate crime, it was also found that after eight weeks the Police stopped publishing weekly hate crime rates from local forces, sending out the message that these had dropped, when actually they had increased at a higher rate (Burnett, 2017). This is significant because it further highlights that the Police do not view racial violence, which was at that time focused on ethnic minorities and immigrants as important as other matters.

LIMITATIONS

Study Design

Research into this topic is mostly conducted in the US and in the UK, these studies mostly focus on a psychiatric or medical view. Attempting research into this topic from a

person-centred approach is still difficult due to the vulnerability of the sample. when more attention has been gathered perhaps studies can have a stronger design, and until then cross-sectional designs from secondary data sources are still most common. The difficulty with this is that the results cannot be generalised to wider populations, and studies often conclude with 'needs further research' due to varying results.

This study was a cross sectional study, which makes it difficult to suggest causality because the information is taken from one snapshot in time, and from one sample. Most importantly, the effects that would be seen in this study depends on the sample that has been given, this accounts for the variability in results and conclusions suggested by a range of researchers within the topic. The problem with this is that, whilst we get a genera idea of the scale of the problem, we cannot fully gauge an understanding because the results will ever change from sample to sample, (Setia, 2016). On the other hand, considering this subject is still quite niche, and the sample is vulnerable which means it is difficult to research in person, conducting cross-sectional studies does allow for researchers to see that the subject is important, and more attention does need to be paid. With highlight, access to more powerful designs would be more likely in future. Further, in the case of healthcare services, like social care, cross sectional studies allow services to think about planning for future services (Critchley, 2004)

Data Collection Technique

The study used secondary data collected by the local authority, while this allowed for the researcher to have a much larger sample in a shorter time, it also meant that some of the data required was not available, this is a major disadvantage of secondary data because the researcher has no control over how the data is collected, and what data is collected, (Johnston, 2017). In this study, this was a particular issue because there was no comparator

which could have changed the focus on the whole study and allowed for a deeper analysis between and within sample, on a deeper level than in chapter 4.

Further the data collection method left the study open to bias and error; as the local authority was interested in the research, as the implications could save them money and therefore there was a vested interest. The data could have been manipulated skew results. Alternatively, the training of the those pulling the data is unknown, and whether they used the same techniques as the author would have is also unknown. Inconsistent methods could cause error in the data Further, the local authority is also the corporate parent of the Vulnerable adolescents and therefore give consent for the anonymous data to be used. This causes an ethical dilemma, as to whether permission has been given by the local authority for the better wellbeing of the young person, or for the Local Authority themselves (Tripathy, 2013)

Practice Implications - Statute

Compared to the smaller study in which details about return interviews were not recorded in a way that could be analysed, the databased from the Local Authority did contain enough to be analysed. However according to the information return interviews only took place in 43.3% of cases with the majority of information either being missing, not offered or refused. Positively, in the cases where return interviews were taking place these were within 72 hours in 78.5% of cases. the implication here being that data is not being recorded accurately by the Local Authority as there is lots of missing data. Data is not specific enough in that we are not aware if return interviews are not being offered or refused. Thirdly, compliance to statute is not even at 50% if return interviews only take place in 43.3% of cases and yet there appears to be no sanctions when the impact means that adolescents may be at more risk of serious harm, and protections are not being put in place; equally more

money is being used by public services to fund missing searches when a collaborative strategy meeting to bridge an unmet need may prevent further multiple incidents.

Ethical Implications - Quality of Care

We have seen that return interviews are not being conducted fully according to statutory guidelines. It has been considered that the reason for this is due to budget cuts and the increasing numbers and complex needs of children in care. Given these increased demands it is assumed that Children's Services would re-allocate funds to work more efficiently to protect those under their care, and collaboratively with other public services they interact with on the young person's behalf. However, Morse (2019) reported that in the previous report in 2016 Ofsted judged 23 of 103 Local Authorities as 'Good' in their endeavour to help or protect children. We have discussed the harm that can come to young people who run away. It is important that return interviews are completed as statute so that the correct processes and strategies can be put in place to protect the child. It is unethical to reduce Child Protection to a financial saving exercise.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to identify the factors associated with increased runaway behaviour within a large sample of LAC. Older children, being NEET, having more total placements, experiencing mental illness, alcohol difficulties and being at risk of trafficking were correlated with increased runaway incidences. The study also had a small sample of UASC who were descriptively analysed separately due to literature suggesting that their runaway experiences were different. Usually, secondary data and cross-sectional studies results in a less powerful study, however given that this is an area of study with a vulnerable population and less researched, it has allowed for a larger sample and more exploratory results to be

gained. From this, we have been able to duplicate results from a smaller study with similar results, and duplicate results that were uncertain due to inaccurate recording. It is recommended that as unlikely that additional funding will be allocated for this matter, CPD and additional training to be given to civil services into the risks and warning signs of runaway behaviour. Given that social services are often involved in cases of missing children, that more emphasis and time is spend on data sharing and encouraging interdisciplinary working. Finally, that the government updates statutory guidelines on when children runaway or go missing from home or care so that Children's services and professionals can have an updated guideline to work from that reflects the seriousness of the increasing problem.

This study also aimed to identify whether return to care interviews were being conducted as stipulated within county; and if there were any factors contributing to the successful completion of a return to care interview following a runaway episode. The study found that return interviews only took place in 43.3% of cases. Positively, in the cases where return interviews were taking place these were within 72 hours in 78.5% of cases. Where reasons that the adolescent were unknown the young person was less likely to receive a return interview, although there was large Chi Square value which would suggest that the variables were not related, expected as the reason for running away may not be known until after the interview, if the person who reported the young person missing did not know. Further, in the cases where the young person taken into care appeared to be due to Challenging behaviour or Risk of CSE, they were more likely to receive a return interview. Similarly, to the pilot study there was not enough data on the UASC sample to be able to statistically analyse the results, return interviews were conducted on only six occasions and four of those occasions were within 72 hours. Again, the data is cross sectional and using secondary data which is not the most powerful method of analysis but missing LAC is not well researched and Return Interviews even less so, therefore an exploratory investigation gives insight into how to

further develop and where to focus further research ideas. From this study it is apparent that the current statutory guidelines are not sufficient and need revising to consider changes to care working. From an ethical stance, young people are being failed as their care is being viewed in terms of financial implications to local authorities instead of best interest, and there are repeated results from this study and previous that UASC are being treated differently despite also being classed as vulnerable LAC with complex needs. It is recommended that the statutory guidelines are updates, and that all public service workers are expected to read this as part of induction processes if working with young people who may go missing. That deficits in robust data keeping are highlighted to the local authority in terms of the risks it brings to young people who run away; and finally that sanctions be considered for public services who repeatedly cannot evidence reasons for deficits in data keeping despite statutory guidelines, and have limited evidence for strategy meetings to reduce run away behaviour in young people who repeatedly runaway.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

Discussion

Summary of Thesis

This thesis aimed to add to the literature about looked after children who go missing from care. This was initiated in chapter two's systematic review by ascertaining the characteristics present in local authority children who go missing. 14 articles were included in the systematic review and the characteristics that appeared to predict runaway behaviour in LAC included older age, being female, adverse childhood experiences, trauma, placement instability and/or type and mental illness.

From this, it became clear that there was a lack of reliable and validated tools used to accurately gauge and identify those at risk of running away, and that newer tools needed to be created. However, before the development of new risk assessments to predict runaway behaviours in Looked after children could take place, old, validated assessments needed to be evaluated. Therefore, in Chapter three, The Adolescent Concerns Evaluation, as one of the few validated tools was critiqued in order to learn where improvement needed to be made. Whilst a versatile tool, the ACE had little concurrent validity and no normative data.

In chapter four, identifying and assessing young people in care at risk of running away was further considered in terms of whether the sample was homo or heterogenous, whether the characteristics if the sample was heterogenous would be the same, and whether or not it was appropriate to therefore use one tool to measure all children in care. It was, as hypothesised; suggested that Runaway British LAC and UASC presented with significantly different characteristics, within and between samples. Due to this, two logistic models were developed as initial possibilities for future predictive tools, the British LAC model had a predictability of 73.5% and the UASC model had a predictability of 79.6%.

Using a larger sample in Chapter five, the thesis first aimed to look at duplicating the results from the pilot study at a bigger level, and also to identify the factors associated with increased runaway behaviour, from a sample that was countywide and involved greater characteristics. The use of the bigger sample from Chapter five, allowed the results from the chapter four pilot to be further strengthened and also to further weight to results that were invalidated due to inaccurate recording or too small a sample for statistical analysis.

Chapter five then looked at bringing this information together and the impact on services such as the police, social services and other local authorities when statute with regards to return to care interviews following a runaway episode is not followed as outlined, and the impact that has on the young people at risk of running or repeat running. Following this, the aim was to identify if there were any factors contributing to the successful completion of a return to care interview following a runaway episode. It was found that return interviews only took place in 43.3% of cases. Positively, in the cases where return interviews were taking place these were within 72 hours in 78.5% of cases. Further, in the cases where the young person taken into care appeared to be due to Challenging behaviour or Risk of CSE, they were more likely to receive a return interview. Similarly, to the pilot study there was not enough data on the UASC sample to be able to statistically analyse the results, return interviews were conducted on only six occasions and four of those occasions were within 72 hours.

Previous Literature

Considering the results of the systematic review as a general consensus of current literature; there should have been a difference between isolated event and recurrent runaways, older females should have run away slightly more frequently than males. ACEs were

expected within children who ran away samples, ACEs should include experiences such as abuse, substance misuse, criminality, school disturbances and home disturbances. Placement Stability was also reported to be significant predicator of runaway behaviour. Within the pilot study there were limited females and therefore a gender difference was not found, there were significant differences between young people who ran away and those that did not; in British LAC. children in care with ACEs were more likely to runaway than those without. When looking at the bigger sample in the first empirical study, the results concurred with current literature. Older children were more likely to run away, as were the children who had experienced more placements during their time in care. Those with school disturbances that led to being not in education, training or employment were more likely to run away, and those with adverse childhood experiences such as substance misuse, mental illness and risk of trafficking were correlated with increased runaway behaviour. A gender difference was not observed by the study; however the majority of the sample were not from foster care, and it was noted from the systematic review that in the case where more females were found more likely to run away; the sample were from foster care.

UASC are not only minors, in the care of the local authority, been through traumatic circumstances, often do not have English as a first language and occasionally fearful of authoritative figures. These factors make this sample difficult to design a high-powered experiment around whilst capturing the voice of the young people themselves. Researchers need to consider issues of consent, interpreters, cultural nuances, the element of the local authority of a parental figure, and how to support young people afterwards if they would like to consider interviews, these factors take more time and resources. This means that there are limited research studies into the risk factors of UASC who runaway and/or their experiences of return to care interviews or reasons for running away. Thus, it is difficult to consider

whether or not the results from the pilot study and subsequent studies concur with previous literature.

Process of Running away in Local Authority Children

Considering the results of the studies undertaken in this thesis, Figure 7.1 is presented as a process of running away for child protection cases, looking at UASC and British LAC specifically. This is a two branched process as we have established that LAC and UASC are not only different in terms of characteristics and runaway behaviours, but also in terms of the treatment received from services. Each young person, regardless of the group they come under are then risk assessed as either ran away or did not run away. Those that did not run away, are separated into their own group and analysed for their characteristics. Those that did runaway are then separated into those that had a return interview, those that did not have a return interview, and those that did not return. Those that did not return would be analysed for their characteristics should there have been enough young people for that to happen in a statistically appropriate manner. Finally, for those that did, and did not have a return interview there is also the possibility that they may or may not run again; and they also need to be considered.

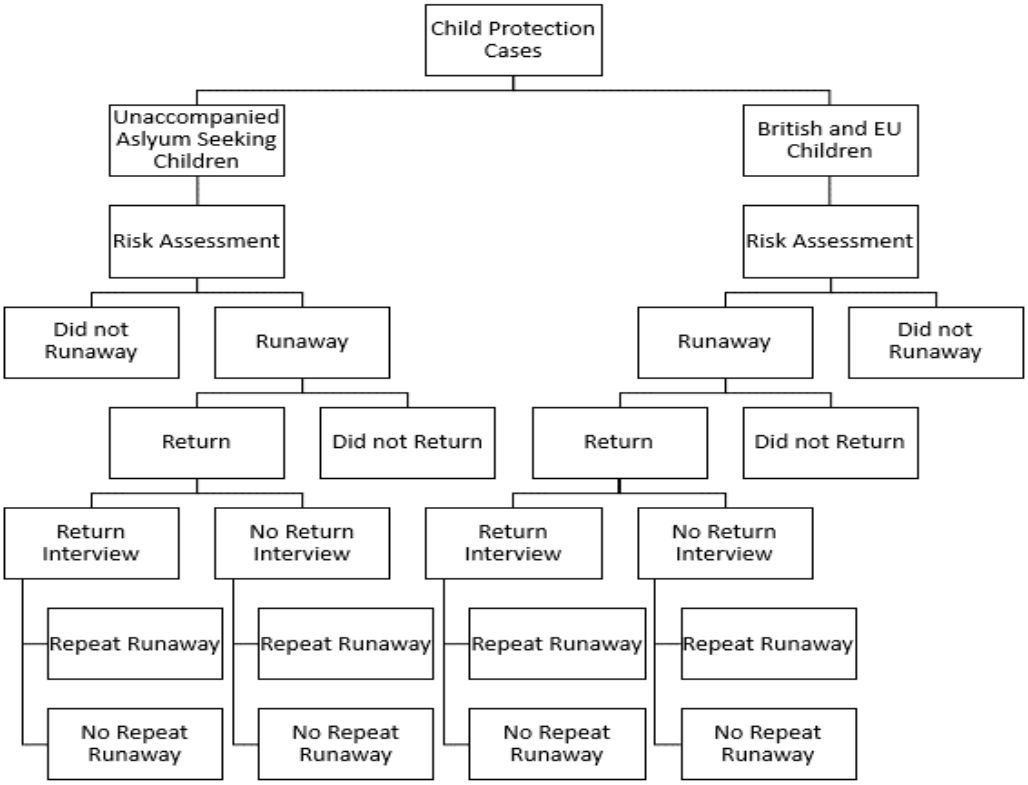


Figure 6.1

This process was tested using the pilot study data, as this data had information on children who had not runaway and also a bigger sample of UASC. Due to limited date on Return interviews, this aspect of the process was removed, and this process was tested using a modified version. It is suggested that in future, this aspect is put back in when looking to test future predictive tools. See Figure 6.1 for how this process worked in practice.

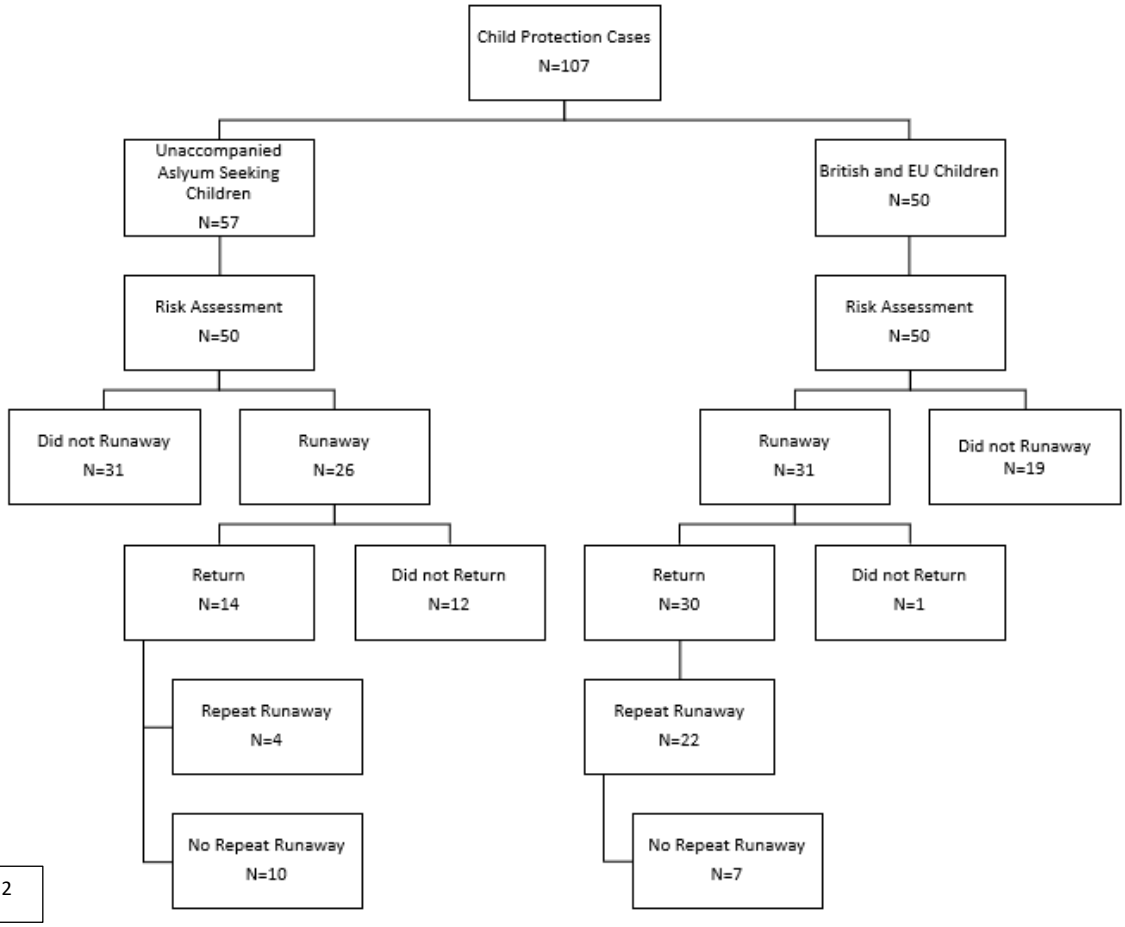


Figure 6.2

Using this process, given that the suggested model from chapter four has not reached a point in which it has been tested with a large UASC sample, young people at high risk of repeated running away could be identified for priority intervention. From this we would see that 22 LAC would be considered high risk, and 4 UASC would be considered high risk of repeat running away. The models from chapter four would suggest that 28 LAC and 28 UASC are at risk of running away, whilst this process is too simplified to capture UASC at risk of running away, it would capture the majority of LAC, who as a sample are more likely to be repeat runaways. Such a process would work as an interim to capture young people in care at risk of running away until models such as that suggested in Chapter four can be tested in future.

Practical Implications

This thesis has suggested via the different methods of researching several ways in which public services such as social services, the police, the government and other external agencies with involvement with a child may adapt their way of working to reduce the risk of runaway behaviours and therefore adverse consequences. Training for all professionals, amending of governmental policies, amendment of interventions due to the heterogeneity of the sample group have all been suggested and need to be considered. Further, it is accepted that funding is poor and stretched across children's services and therefore a free or low-cost risk assessment with easy accessibility and use needs to be developed and validated to highlight those most at risk so that the limited resources can be focused on those that are most at risk. Therapeutic rapport also needs to be considered in terms of working with local and asylum-seekers especially in the current climate with the likes of Brexit and increased racisms and the characteristics of those more likely to be in the care of the local authority and to run away.

As highlighted in the pilot study, this thesis also demonstrated how through pilot study data, one can begin to put together the beginning of a checklist which can eventually make way for a validated tool. It has been repeatedly discussed and highlighted how severe the need for a modernised and properly assessed tool for this area of research is. Not only for the bettering of the young people, reduction of costing, but also from a forensic view in order to reduce the impact of criminality on the general public but also vulnerable people getting into the position whereby they find themselves where they have to turn to criminality in order to survive.

Training

Given the current economic crisis, particularly within the UK, funding for services is not going to increase to such an extent that children's services will have the resources needed to tackle some of the issues presented in this thesis. This means that services need to be clever in terms of using the current resources. One way in which this can be done is via training. Social workers, Police officers and organisations that believe in bettering their staff should be actively encouraging Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Using this time as a way to train staff in the risks associated with increasing runaway behaviour.

Interdisciplinary Working

Some of the required data for this thesis necessitated information from both the local authority and from the police. Unfortunately, whilst the local authority were supportive in providing information, it was not possible to receive data from the Police. The difficulty here is that this information was required for a study to improve and increase knowledge about this issue, yet interdisciplinary working was not demonstrated. Information is held about the adolescent's runaway behaviour by one, or the other professional instead of having information shared by all in which strategies to reduce runaway behaviour could be developed. The Children's Society (2011) suggests that there needs to be a priority in creating links between agencies working with a child at risk in order to respond effectively and efficiently within the resource restrictions available.

Strengths

This thesis has brought some new findings into a niche area of research, it has also replicated some research that been previously found with a different sample set. It has suggested further avenues to research and suggested ways for this to go forward, as well has governmental and practise implications; and how these gaps could be filled via

recommendations suggested below. Given that runaway children are an area that is progressively getting worse, it is important that research such as this continues to push forward and gather attention.

Recommendations

Policy

There has not been a statutory update to the guidance when children runaway or go missing from home or care since June 2014; and yet since this time Sarah Marsh (2019) reported for the Guardian Newspaper that there has been an increase of 1000 children going missing from care homes since 2015. This highlights that the problem is getting worse, and also that the current statutory guidance is outdated and insufficient for the scale of the current problem. It is recommended that the government take heed to the available secondary data studies and appropriate update policy as a short-term way to manage this problem, until a longer-term plan of training staff, encouraging interdisciplinary working and reassigning current resources can be done to work on reducing the risks seen here to increase runaway incidents.

Local Authority

Local authorities are in most cases the cooperate parent of the child, they are also the bank of rich data. Whilst primary data studies may not currently be possible, Local Authorities are hoarding a mass of data that is underused due to the impact of budget cuts meaning that understaffed analysts can do little more than collate figures for statutory returns (Turner, 2019). They could enter agreements with universities in order to have their data analysed for low costs by students or staff, in order to find ways to improve working. This allows universities publishing possibilities and the local authorities to have their data analysed appropriately,

Data Keeping

Statutory Guidance (Department for Education, 2014) suggests that robust data on repeat running incidents should be kept by the local authorities, reported and analysed to monitor potential risks of harm to the young people. From the database used here and in the pilot study we can see that there are many gaps in the data. Going forward it would be important to highlight to the local authority the risks in not having access to these missing data points. For example, not being able to draw conclusions and find solutions for high-risk young people.

Policy

The Guidance (Department for Education, 2014) discusses the importance of return interviews however, not much emphasis is placed on Safe and Well checks. In the database used in chapter five it would appear that Safe and well checks and return to care interviews have been compiled into one. It is recommended that these are split back into two separate interviews as there are different functions. The return interview should be held in a neutral place where a child feels safe (Department for Education, 2014) for a multitude of reasons the police may not feel safe or trustworthy to a child and therefore an accurate assessment on future risk of running away may not be possible. The safe and well check is to see whether an offence may have been committed against the child.

Sanctions

It has been considered before that for local authorities and for police services that cannot provide adequate data and figures on runaway children as statute, there should be sanctions (Green and Hayden, 2014). Given that this study is the second in which inaccurate recording has led to an inability to analyse results, it is agreed that in cases where there is a high number of unexplained missing young people, particularly with the same young people having multiple runaway episodes and appearing to have no evidence of application of prevention strategies.

Limitations

Future research needs to consider the limitations discussed throughout this thesis. Although the research pool is limited, it is time to move past cross sectional studies which are statistically less powerful and move towards studies that can suggest causality. In this way, we can further the research area and draw more resources rather than just suggesting relationships and speculating. Much research, as found during the research scoping in the systematic review, is from the US or the UK. More research needs to be conducted outside of these countries so that generalisation of research can be applied, taking into accounts the different cultural and societal views of child protection and running away. We know that runaways are not homogeneous, and that unaccompanied asylum-seekers differ to local runaways therefore we can presume that runaways in one country will differ to runaways in another country. There are so many different definitions for running away, it is important for the research area to come up with a definition that can be used universally; this will help to ensure that research findings are replicable because the term would have been operationalised in the same way, this will allow researchers to see whether the current disagreements in the literature are due to heterogeneous samples, or not operationalising research terms. It has been highlighted plainly that there is limited primary data research into this area. This makes it hard to make big progresses as causation and generalisations cannot be made. Meanwhile, there is also awareness between researchers in the area that there is an increasing problem and children are at high risk of harm. The implication being that research that may hold the key to reducing risk of harm is caught in a spiral in which in order to get more funding, more access and highlight, more primary data studies need to be conducted. However, due to the vulnerability of the populations and the possibility of unearthing information gaps in public

services, ethics will not be granted for those primary studies without more highlight on the subject evidencing why the study is important enough to warrant possibly exposing a child's vulnerability, and possible failings of public services. More emphasise has to be placed on finding a midpoint to get primary studies out and encouraging interdisciplinary working to do so. Considering that the amount of young people aged 16 and over running away has risen by 78% between 2009/2010 and 2017/18 and UASC are a major contributor to that number, as the number of older UASC grew by 150% during this period and accounted for 60% of the 78% increase (Institute for Government, 2019). It was hoped that within this database there would have been a larger sample of UASC, and to use this to test for correlational relationships with regards to return interviews. The data in this study and previous continually hints at negative relationships that suggests that UASC who runaway are less likely to receive a return interview or be offered supportive services of that of their British or EU LAC. Such a conclusion would have serious ethical implications, considering the current political climate with Brexit; and also, in terms of public services not committing to statutory guidelines. This research must be pushed for and is a large limitation of these studies due to the design.

Future research

Future research should look at comparing runaways and non-runaways from a larger sample group replicating a similar study from the pilot. In order to move forward with developing a runaway risk tool. However, the sample should not only be larger but also have a larger representation of local authority children. Within the local authority sample here, there was a small sample of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children, ideally further research should endeavour to have a larger sample of UASC to improve the factors that can be added to the suggested risk tool for UASC. Further, this local authority was with runaways

from as large town sample, it would be worth comparing cities and smaller towns, to see if the risk factors would be different depending on the availability of risks are different such as drugs etc. again, here we have the return interview data from one local authority, it would be worth attempting to get the data from the police forces and local authorities from across the country or at least more than one, to have more of an idea of how return interviews are being conducted. Particularly as this local authority has been heavily criticised already for its record keeping. There is plenty of work to be done within this field, but this gives a guide of where there are gaps and how they can be filled.

Final Conclusion

This thesis planned to add to the limited research into the increasing problem of Children under the care of the Local Authority in United Kingdom running away and/or being reported missing. Specifically, to understand the factors that increase likelihood of this sample group going missing, whether this group of children which can also include Unaccompanied Asylum seeking children are hetero or homogeneous and the differences if heterogeneous, to explore validated risk assessments in use, and to see whether current governmental statute are being followed with regards to missing and/or runaway children under the care of the Local Authority. This thesis has achieved the goals it set out to do. It has replicated several results found in previous studies; limited they may be. It has also found some new results, which may be down to the heterogeneity of the sample. Adding to this, it has added further weight that runaway children, although already believed to be a heterogenous sample in terms of homeless, throwaway, missing, even within these there are greater breakdowns. Within the looked after children sample, local children and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are different. We have found two validated missing children tools, the Needs of Adolescent Runaways and the Adolescents Concerns Evaluation,

the latter being a welcome dynamic progression from the former but requiring further validation that was not conducted due to economic viability but paving the way for future development. We have seen interweaved throughout that the current 2014 guidelines are not being followed as statute, and there are no repercussions to public services not following them. However, not only are services not following them, but they are no longer appropriate for the scale of the problem and the current climate. This thesis adds similar evidence in a range of ways through various means, and therefore future research should move towards meeting the goals highlighted in the future research section rather than continuing to replicate similar studies.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – PECO Inclusion Criteria Checklist

Study Reference:

Authors:

Publication Date:

Country of study:

Inclusion criteria	Criterion met?	Comment
Study Question The study question is looking at runaway behaviour as a primary outcome.	Yes Unclear Discuss No	
Study definition of 'child under the care of the local authority' The definition of child under the care of the local authority includes: Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC), Foster Care, Independent Supported Accommodation (ISA), children in secure settings or residential homes	Yes Unclear Discuss No	
Study design: The following studies can be included: Cohort, case control, analytical cross-sectional studies and Experimental designs	Yes Unclear Discuss No	

such as Randomised Control Trials (RCTS) and Non-Randomised Control Trials (Non-RCTS). Exclude all others.		
Population: Children under the age of 18 in the care of the Local Authority. If the sample are of a mixed age, then there needs to be a clear distinction in the groups for the study to be included in the review. Being under the care of the Local authority includes: Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC), Foster Care, Independent Supported Accommodation (ISA), children in secure settings or residential homes.	Yes Unclear Discuss No	
Intervention: Any characteristic that is considered to be related to the *Outcome* behaviour, for example substance misuse, abuse or gender.	Yes Unclear Discuss No	
Outcomes: The child under 18 has been reported to have 'run away', 'absconded' or been reported as 'missing' or 'absent'. Exclude: kidnap, abduction or trafficking.	Yes Unclear Discuss No	

If all questions answered with yes, include study, If no, comment below:

Appendix B – Quality Assessment and Risk of Bias

Did the study address a clearly focused issue?	
Was the sample recruited in an acceptable way?	
Were the children in local authority care, was this clearly stated	
Was the study instrument that measured the parameter of interest shown to have validity and reliability?	
Did the study identify characters for runaway behaviour	
Did the authors identified important confounding factors? Were these considered in the research design & analysis?	

Appendix C – Modified Cochrane Collaboration Bias assessment Tool

Domain	Rating	Support for judgement	Review authors' judgement
Selection bias: Selection bias refers to systematic differences between baseline characteristics of the groups that are compared.			
Random sequence generation: Was there randomization of selection?	Low High Unclear	*Describe the method used to generate the allocation sequence in sufficient detail to allow an assessment of whether it should produce comparable groups.*	
Allocation concealment: Was there concealment of which group participant will be allocated to?	Low High Unclear	*Describe the method used to conceal the allocation sequence in sufficient detail to determine whether intervention allocations could have been foreseen in advance of, or during, enrolment.*	
Performance bias: the risk that knowledge of which intervention was received, rather than the intervention itself, affects outcomes			
Blinding of participants and personnel	Low High Unclear	*Describe all measures used, if any, to blind study participants and personnel from knowledge of which intervention a participant*	

Assessments should be made for each main outcome (or class of outcomes).		*received. Provide any information relating to whether the intended blinding was effective.*	
Detection/Measurement bias: refers to systematic differences between groups in how outcomes are determined			
Blinding of outcome assessment *Assessments should be made for each main outcome (or class of outcomes).*	Low High Unclear	*Describe all measures used, if any, to blind outcome assessors from knowledge of which intervention a participant received. Provide any information relating to whether the intended blinding was effective.*	.
Attrition bias: loss to follow up, withdrawals, other missing data			
Incomplete outcome data *Assessments should be made for each main outcome (or class of outcomes).*	Low High Unclear	*Describe the completeness of outcome data for each main outcome, including attrition and exclusions from the analysis. State whether attrition and exclusions were reported, the numbers in each intervention group (compared with total randomized participants)*	.

Reporting bias: systematic differences between reported and unreported finding			
Selective reporting: NOTE: Compare methods to results – look for: outcomes measured (or likely to be measured) but not reported outcomes added, statistics changed, subgroups only reporting that cannot be used in a review (e.g. stating non-significance without numerical results)	Low High Unclear	*State how the possibility of selective outcome reporting was examined by the review authors, and what was found.*	

Appendix D – Data Extraction Form

Study Reference:

Authors:

Publication Date:

Country of study:

Date of Data Extraction

Type of Article	
What type of Research I.e. Grey, government, journal, thesis, book, other.	
Was it published?	
If published, was it peer reviewed	

Study Characteristics	
Study Aims	
Hypothesis	
What type of study design	
Was the study described as randomized	
Sample description	
Where was the study carried out	
Were there different groups	
If so, what where they?	
Was runaway operationalized	

Characteristics Identified in the study	
Demographic characteristics of the child e.g. age, gender or ethnicity	
Family characteristics	
Abuse or neglect	
Sexual exploitation	
Family conflict i.e. DV or conflict	
Educational difficult i.e. truant or bullying	
Mental health difficult	
Criminality i.e. gang, theft, dealing	
Significant life events	
Substance misuse i.e. drugs or alcohol	
Trafficking	
Other (specify)	

Research Findings