

PUSH AND PULL FACTORS: WHAT CAUSES A CHILD TO GO MISSING



Children go missing for lots of reasons, but a missing incident puts them at an increased risk of encountering significant harm, including Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Criminal Exploitation. When a child comes back, they often need additional support- but we can only find out what they need through talking to them in what's commonly called a return home interview.

What is a Return Home Interview (RHI)?

Return interviews allow a child to open up about whether they have encountered any harm whilst they have been missing. To allow the child to speak freely, it's best for these to be completed independently of Police, Children's Social Care and Placement Providers. Independent people like Missing Case Workers can conduct the interview and then relay key info to the other parties where appropriate.

Interviewers will explore the following areas with a child, to try to find out what caused them to go missing.

PUSH FACTORS

- ↗ Family Conflict
- ↗ Parental Separation
- ↗ Domestic Abuse in the home
- ↗ Neglect
- ↗ Physical, Emotional or Sexual Abuse
- ↗ Parental Substance Misuse
- ↗ Mental Health Concerns
- ↗ Issues with their care placement

PULL FACTORS

- ↗ Criminal Exploitation (including county lines)
- ↗ Sexual Exploitation
- ↗ Negative Peer Relationships
- ↗ Anti-Social Behaviour
- ↗ Substance Misuse
- ↗ Parties/Gatherings
- ↗ Visiting Family away from placement

What should parents or carers do when the child returns?

STAY CALM

Try not to be angry and shout at them, as this may only make them more distressed.

TALK IT OUT

Make sure they are OK, check that they are not harmed and try and have a calm conversation with them.

LET PEOPLE KNOW

Ensure that you inform the Police if they have returned prior to the Police locating them. Notify any other parties that were trying to locate them.