

Missing children: a critical analysis of collaborative institutional responses in England

Project examining how the recording and sharing of information on missing children across agencies in England affects collaborative institutional responses.

Key details

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Police region	Yorkshire
Level of research	PhD
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Research context

Missing children in the UK are highly vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking (Sidebottom and others 2021). Research identifies missing children as a gateway to these dangers. However, most studies focus on victimisation over a lifespan and outcomes for those who went missing, rather than their initial vulnerability and prevention.

Additionally, research often targets specific communities or genders, highlighting their vulnerability to modern slavery or trafficking. Despite extensive research on missing children and exploitation, these issues are usually treated separately rather than interconnected vulnerabilities.

Research methodology

This research builds on previous postgraduate datasets from Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to local authorities and police across England, providing a preliminary understanding of missing children (Calder, 2021). By focusing on demographic data and lived experiences, it aims to produce transformative recommendations for practice and policy.

I am in the process of conducting qualitative interviews with practitioners, police and charitable partnerships in order to best understand practice perspective for substantive recommendations for transformative change.

The central research question is:

- how does the recording and sharing of information on missing children across agencies in England affect collaborative institutional responses?

Using a mixed methods approach, the study will first gather quantitative data from FOI requests, which will then inform qualitative semi-structured interviews. This methodology, similar to Bryman and Burgess's (2002) approach when researching Gypsies and government policy, combines quantitative and qualitative data to form comprehensive insights.

The triangulation of these data sources will create meta-inferences, providing a comparative understanding of FOI data and interview findings. This will help critically analyse collaborative institutional responses to missing children in England.

References

Bryman A and Burgess RG. (2002). 'Developments in qualitative data analysis: An introduction'. In Bryman A and Burgess RG, eds, 'Analyzing Qualitative Data'. London: Routledge, pages 1–17

Calder L. (2021). 'A critical analysis. Understanding the effects of child protection practice on child sexual exploitation – Can England uphold the human rights of a child: Who is looking for our missing children.' Sheffield: Hallam University

Sidebottom A and others. (2020). 'Missing children: risks, repeats and responses'. Policing and Society, volume 30(10), pages 1157–1170