

Police treat you differently depending on your background

If the police know that you are from an area that is viewed negatively, they will treat you negatively. A specialist missing team in the police that know young people and are trained in a welfare response could help, but the problem is likely bigger. Training is required for the police on trauma and welfare-informed responses and cultural competency. Some police officers are better than others but across the service there is a need to remember that it is children and young people they are interacting with.

Welfare responses are slower for Black young people (especially boys)

Local data could be analysed to track this - this is an action for the police and council. Some felt this problem would persist as police officers don't like Black young people. Some linked this to the adultification of Black boys and young men in particular, but also young women. It was felt that more conversations would need to be had between agencies and communities to explore this problem.

Children in care removed from informal support networks

...so escalation to professional (police) response happens more quickly. Including more trusted (non-professional people) in safety planning; providing more support for carers with risk assessment; and fostering mutual support between carers could help. Carers need to show more interest in young people, their lives and experiences.

Children in care subject to double standard

Sometimes treated like adults, for example living semi or fully independently, but then also like children, for example having strict curfews. Specialist training for carers, mutual support networks for carers, and reflective spaces with supervising social workers could support a more nuanced response. Care settings should allow young people a sense of independence.

What else could help mitigate some of these inequalities?

- Video calls to introduce young people to out of hours workers to get to know them
- A prompt sheet for supervising social workers to use with carers about the emotional aspect of missing and return (to help manage risk assessment)
- Not sending groups of police officers to look for one young person (adding that in most cases they will make their own way back).

Concern was shared that this is not a tick box exercise and that actions are followed through.

Inequalities

protective responses for young people can be different depending on age, background, gender and ethnicity

If it was a black girl, they'd take their time probably by ten minutes or something to - it's just. It's like a favouritism, in a way.

(Building Safety consortium member)