

# INSTRUCTIONS



These cards have been developed from the Keeping Safe research project. They are a way of sharing core findings and key messages from the research, and have been designed for use as a reflective/discussion tool for practitioners and professionals working with children and young people.

They are designed for use in pairs, teams or small groups, to facilitate discussion and shared learning, but they can also be used individually. Use them how best suits, but we have some suggestions:

The images can be a starting point – what do you think the image is about? What would you expect the messages from the research to be for this issue?

The core messages in the text can be used to reflect on understandings. Do the messages align with your own thinking and practice? Do they align with the practice contexts you work in?

The 'stop and think' sections provide specific examples/questions to focus on for discussion. Reflect on good practice too! Are there other examples?

Finally, what are the challenges presented by or in the messages? At what level? What could be changed, what can you do? What can others do? Who is important here?

These cards are free to use but would you tell us whether, when, and how you have used them, and any of the conversations or outcomes?

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#KeepingSafe #CheckYourThinking



Text © 2019 Sophie Hallett | Illustrations © 2019 Laura Sorvala  
Keeping Safe research: <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/research/explore/find-a-project/view/1513282-keeping-safe>  
This project has been funded by the Welsh Government through Health and Care Research Wales





# 'PLACEMENT MOVES'

**CHECK  
YOUR  
THINKING**

Moving children and young people has significant consequences for them. **The more moves a child or young person experiences, the higher their chances are of becoming victims of sexual exploitation later on.** It also raises the chances of them:

- going on to experience abuse in intimate relationships in early adulthood;
- having an unstable housing situation in later life;
- not being in education and/or employment.

Moving children contributes to life feeling unpredictable and uncertain. It can be experienced as a lack of belonging and lead to feelings of having no control. Without a stable home life, feelings of rejection and insecurity are exacerbated.

**Does the way we talk about this and manage this with a young person reflect this?**

**Example:**

**'Placements'?**

home

home-away-from-home

better-than-home

next-best-to-home

not real home

**'Placement moves'**

**'being taken into care',  
'placement breakdown'?**

'having to leave home'

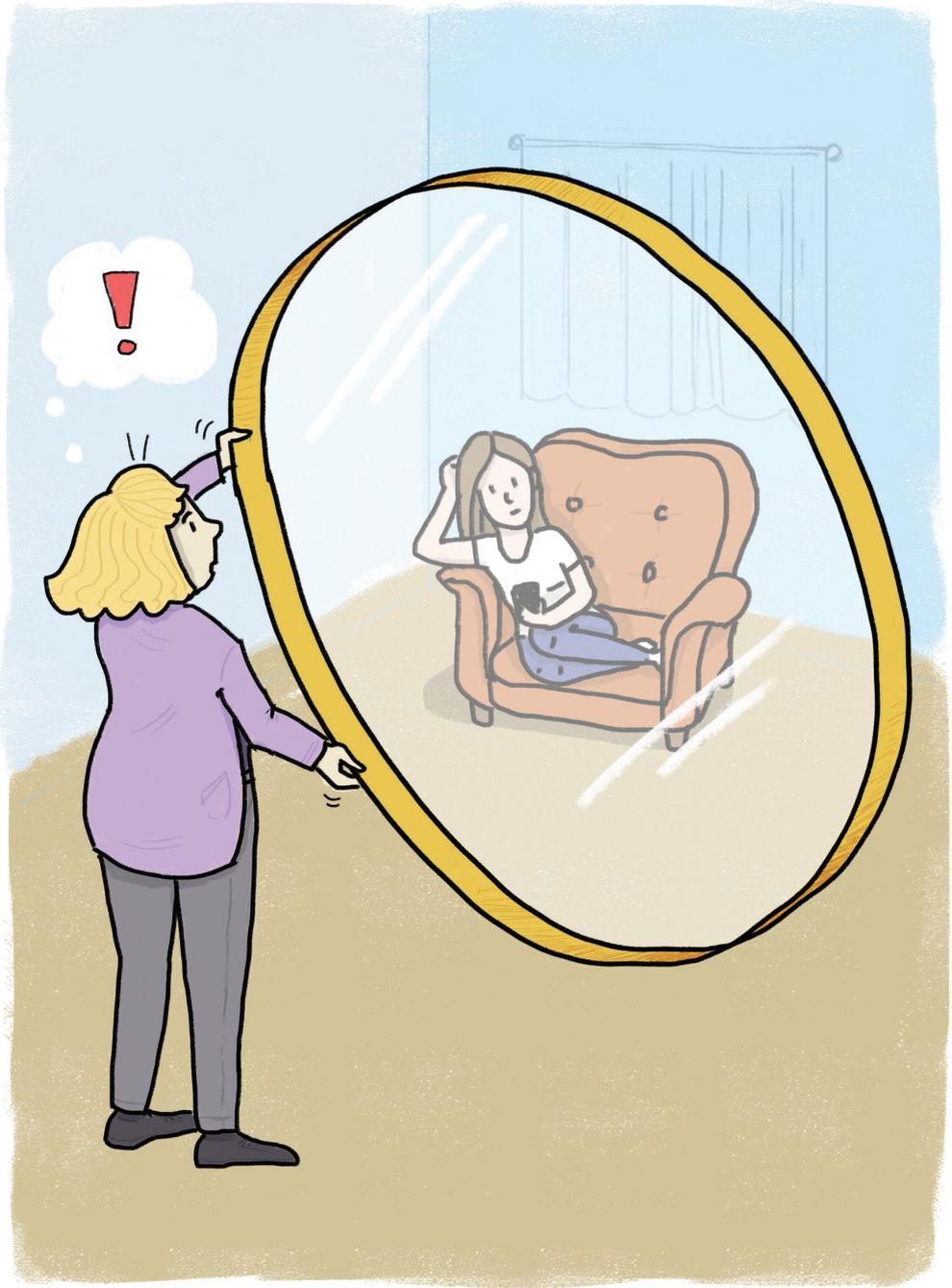
'being moved from someone's house'

'we need you to feel 'at home''

'is this feeling like home'

'do you feel at home here'

**What is the challenge for you? What can you do?**



# YOUR RISK LENS



## Where is your 'risk lens'? What is the focus of the concern?

Young people were angry at the bodily or behavioural attention they received, and the seemingly limited concern for them and their happiness.

- They know about risks and the potential consequences of risky behaviours;
- They engage in these because they feel frustrated, or they are angry, or they want to have fun.

'Keep safe' or 'risk education' is too narrow a focus for any intervention. This focus can mean that young people themselves become the objects of concern.

Professionals' attention on risks can reinforce a young person's frustrations or anger, **if the focus is not on changing things for them or their circumstances**, and centres on them changing their behaviours.





# GOING 'MISSING'



“ It's kind of missing but it's not missing because I'm not really really missing. It's just that not many people know where I am. But I probably like just going out and freeing myself from stuff that I don't want to be around. ”

Young people can run away or 'go missing' because they feel unsafe, or unhappy where they live, or they want to get away from things or from people in their lives.

Understanding **why** a young person is 'going missing' is as important as finding out **where** they are going and **who** with.

Understanding the different forms of 'going missing' is important too. This can help you think about your response both in the moment but with a longer-term view.

## Some questions to consider:

Are they missing? i.e. you know where they are, but they shouldn't be there?

Can you make home (or where they are running from) a happier place to be?

Does anyone 'miss' them?  
Has anyone given them any positive attention recently?  
Is there a significant person in their life?

Is it safe enough at this time?

## What is the challenge for you? What can you do?

WHAT MAKES  
YOU HAPPY?



# 'DIRECT WORK'

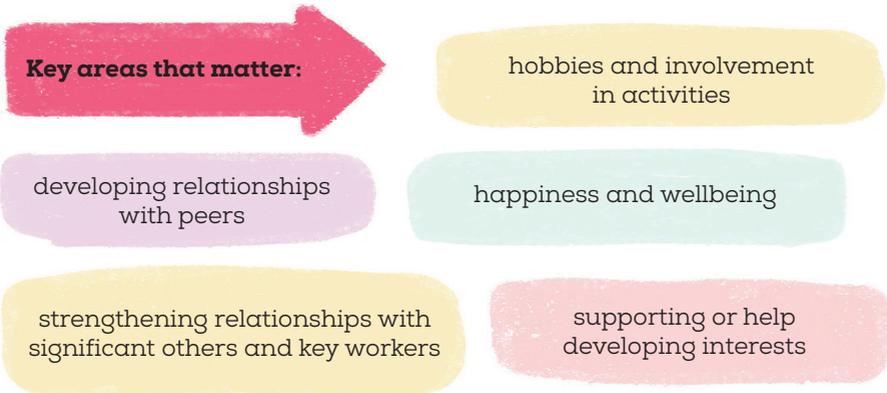


“ Most of the time that I had people talk to me was about like risky things, sexual exploitation. And I don't know, like I feel like everyone that's been talking to me kind of says the same thing. ”

Long-term intensive engagement with a young person is likely to make the difference for them.

One-to-one work, such as spending time with a young person, engaging them in activities, or addressing their confidence and self-esteem has a positive impact.

**Too many relationships for young people are centred primarily around their risk and their harm, and not around their happiness**, and attention is not given to them and their interests and needs. Some young people considered that their workers are there to 'find something out' rather than hear what they have to say.

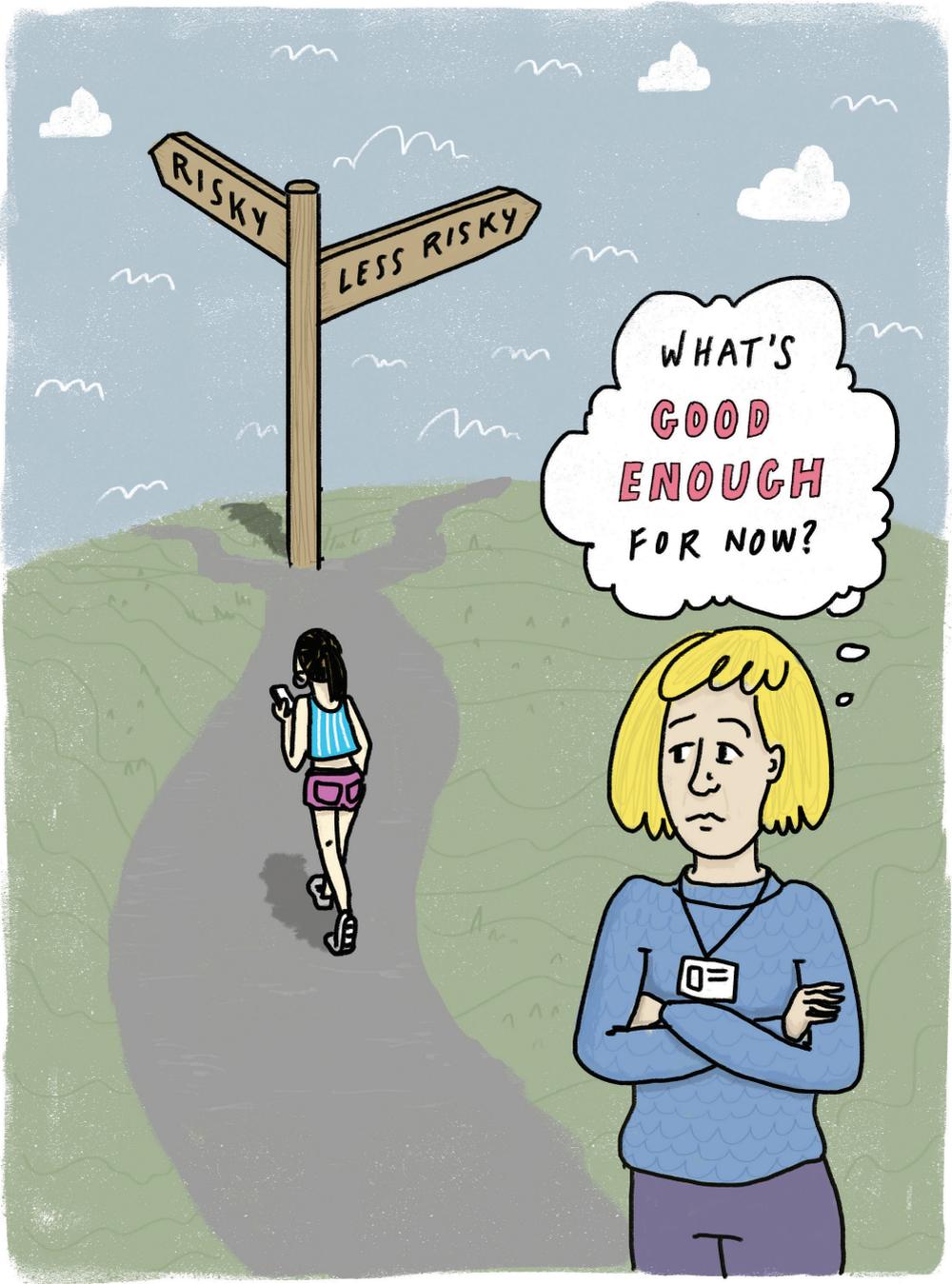


## What is the challenge for you? What can you do?



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# RISK?



Participants relayed **concerns about a risk-driven approach to tackling sexual exploitation**. Ensuring young people are safe from harm is vital, however:

**This can work punitively** i.e. young people are unable to be outside with peers or engage in certain activities, they have phones removed, are checked on repeatedly.

Decisions can be driven by a 'risk-adverse' approach offering protection in the short-term, but **which does not easily facilitate positive outcomes** in the longer-term (and sometimes even the shorter-term).

The potential judgement of court, and any possible inquiry should a worse-case scenario occur, can drive decision-making. This is over and above what **might be considered to be best at that time**, given the circumstances.

There can be minimal flexibility for managing risk 'in the moment'. **There is a need for a more dynamic approach to managing risk, and a need to open up the possibility for wellbeing to be the driver for practice.**

A diagram with a central red arrow pointing right labeled 'Stop and think:'. To its right is a purple rounded rectangle containing two questions. Below the arrow are four more rounded rectangles in light green, light red, light purple, and light yellow, each containing a question. At the bottom is a light blue rounded rectangle containing a summary question.

**Stop and think:**

What are the problems with a 'good enough for now' approach to risk?  
What are the possibilities?

What are the drivers for decision-making around risk?

Is this a challenge you recognise in your role?

Do you have concerns with allowing young people to take risks? What are these?

Is there anything that would support you to feel confident in using your professional judgement?

**What is the challenge for you? What can you do?**



FOSTER  
CARE



RESIDENTIAL  
CARE



# CARE



There is a need to make sure that children are living in the right setting, with the right supports, so that they are able to stay there and feel happy.

**Example:** young people were moved between parents and family members multiple times; before being removed and being placed in and out of foster care; before being placed and moving between different foster places because of ‘placement breakdowns’; resulting in, for some, a final placement in a residential home.

- Living with family is not always best for a child or young person.
- Some children and young people thrive better in foster care.
- Some children and young people cannot cope and do not want to be in a home with another family.
- Staff may be more equipped and supported in residential care to respond to children with high support needs and/or when there is a high risk they are being sexually exploited.
- Residential care can sometimes be what is best.

Residential care **and** foster care can be equally positive. The best home-from-home depends on the young person, their wishes, their support needs, and the reasons behind the need to take a child or young person into local authority care.

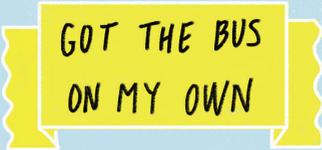
**Stop and think:**

What can be done to better facilitate children staying at home?

What is your perspective on residential care and foster care?

What are the drivers around where is best for a child to live?

**What is the challenge for you? What can you do?**



# OUTCOMES



**Having a supportive adult in their lives had the most positive impact for young people.**

One-to-one work, such as spending time with a young person, engaging them in activities, or addressing their confidence and self-esteem, was also the intervention most likely to help.

These relationships are characterised by small everyday acts and exchanges, which then help to work towards longer-term change.

Those who received this type of support were less likely to have issues with alcohol and drug misuse, and to have involvement with social services as young adults and as parents.

Participants talked about the unrealistic expectations placed upon young people, as well as forgetting to reflect on the small but significant achievements and changes young people have made (and which they as workers have helped to make happen).

**Stop and think:**

What are the 'outcomes' you expect for young people?

What are the short-term 'moments for celebration' that might get lost for young people, and for you and other workers?  
Why is this?

Do you recognise the differences that you may have made for a young person?

**What is the challenge for you? What can you do?**

HOW ARE YOU?

WHY ALL THESE PEOPLE...

HOW ARE YOU?

WHAT'S UP?

WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?



# TOO MANY PEOPLE



Relationship based practice is good but...

“ You have no idea how many people come to see me... More than eight... I don't like it to be honest because it's like too many people trying to get into my life thinking they can help me. No, not really. It's kind of, I think it's making me worse not helping me. ”

Young people participating in the research described how there are too many workers involved, and they find it hard to attach any trust to all of these relationships.

There can be too many people for a child or a young person to have a relationship with. All of these people cannot feature as a 'significant person' in a young person's life. Young people can get lost within this network of multiple professionals.

Repeated or multiple short-term interventions work against predictability and stability, and the sustained relationships that are significant in both preventing and intervening in sexual exploitation.

## Stop and think:

Is there anyone involved who the young person likes or gets on with?

Who is best placed to act as a key person? Are they involved in decision-making?

Is this support helpful – is someone else involved who could communicate/respond/provide this?

Who needs to be involved, and how should they be involved?

How many 'relationships' is this young person having to manage?

## What is the challenge for you? What can you do?

SAFE WELL DONE  
EXIT STRATEGY  
DO YOU LIKE



# MINDFUL LANGUAGE



A theme in the research is about how people talk to young people. Language matters because it shapes the relationship, and can shape young people's experiences.

Young people consistently say that they don't like feeling as if they are a job of work for someone. They also tell us they don't like it when they feel like 'someone is just doing their job', or someone is only there because of their risk.

Language can introduce a 'professionalism'. This can work against the trust and relational aspect of the 'work' you are trying to build with a young person. The words we use can also inadvertently minimise difficult experiences for young people.

## Stop and think:

What phrases do you use that could be problematic for a young person?

How much of what you talk about relates to a young person's happiness and wellbeing, interests and thoughts?

What are the 'work words' you or others use with a young person that could minimise how they experience what is happening?

## Some things to think about:

'We want to keep you safe/we are concerned you are at risk...'

'I understand how you feel...'

...from what? Is the young person clear about what it is you are concerned about?

...do you? Is this a helpful thing to say?

**What is the challenge for you? What can you do?**



# 'EXIT STRATEGY'



In order to manage young people's behaviours and tackle presenting concerns and immediate risks, short-term interventions can often be the focus of provision.

There are challenges for relational-based work within this context.

Repeated or multiple short-term interventions work against predictability and stability, and sustained relationships. Young people describe not wanting to trust any worker because the relationship will end. Professionals talked about the revolving door of people, projects, carers and interventions.

Some of these challenges could be managed by facilitating longer-term support for young people (within and outside of the care context). Managing how these relationships end is important to consider – particularly if there is no other person who is significant for the young person in their life.



## Stop and think:

What does a good 'ending' or 'exit strategy' look like?

What is needed to help these to happen better?

Are these difficult to manage?  
Why? How?

Do you get a chance to reflect on ending the relationship with a young person to anyone?

**What is the challenge for you? What can you do?**