

Runaway Helpline and supporting the children in your care during COVID-19



free • 24/7 • confidential
**runaway
helpline**

We know that during the current covid-19 outbreak, children are less safe than ever if they run away or go missing. We want to help you to keep them safe, and make sure they know how to get in touch with us if they need to talk.

We've put together the following tips in case they're helpful in these difficult times...

- Many of us will be feeling anxious about the current situation, including the young people in your care and this may be affecting their mental health. Talk to them about covid-19: make sure that they know they will be okay, that they understand the social distancing guidelines, and talk through any new expectations on them. Keep in mind that this is a particularly difficult time for children and young people, changes to their education, to being allowed outside, to seeing friends are difficult for everyone but might be even more so for them.
- While family visits and spending time with friends is restricted, it's really important that children and young people are able to stay in contact with safe people in their lives. You should make sure that any children in your care have access to a phone or can get online to maintain communication. With this comes risks, particularly for young people who have been victims of exploitation, so we would recommend reviewing CEOP's online safety guidance, including using parental controls on any devices as appropriate.
- While we encourage children not to go out it

is more important than ever that they are given space and privacy (as appropriate) at home. This could help prevent children from running away or going missing. Talk to the children in your care about what they need and agree a plan if they are feeling stressed or if there are any arguments in the house.

- Exercise can be helpful for everyone's mental health and wellbeing. Government guidance is clear that everyone can still take part in exercise, even if it means leaving the house, once a day. Work with all the professionals supporting a child in your care to plan whether them going out for exercise would be safe and if so, support them to do this. You should assess any potential risks, work with the young person to agree what they can do, and ensure that they know how to follow social distancing guidance while they are out.
- Having fun and keeping entertained will help everyone to stay okay during the outbreak. Speak to the young people in your care about what they would like to do, consider new activities and whether there are any hobbies that they could take up within the house.
- Share the details for Runaway Helpline with any young people in your care. Encourage them to speak to us if they need to talk to someone outside of the home, or if they're feeling overwhelmed. We're available 24/7 and completely free to contact. They can call us by phone (**116 000**), text (**116 000**), email **116000@runawayhelpline.org.uk** or they can chat with us online at **www.runawayhelpline.org.uk**.