

aberlour
scotland's children's charity



ROC Services – Laura Irvine (Service Manager)
Shelter 6th October 2009

Definition

“Running away is used here to mean any young person who spends time away from the family home or substitute care before the age of 16 without the permission of their parents or carers or as a result of being forced to leave by their parents or carers.”

“Missing Out. Young Runaways in Scotland”

(Wade 2001, Aberlour Child Care Trust)

How Many Run Away?

One in nine children (11%) in Scotland run away or are forced to leave home before the age of 16 due to difficulties in their lives.

- **6000 – 7000 children** under 16 run away every year in Scotland for the first time.
- Although most young people reported having run away, **one in seven** had been forced to leave before the age of 16.
- Three quarters of the young people had run away once or twice but **a quarter had run away three times or more.**

Who Runs Away?

- **No** evidence of a **significant difference** in running away rates between **urban, town and rural areas** in Scotland.
- Rate of running away was slightly higher in poorer families in Scotland, but the **link between poverty and running away is at best indirect.**
- Running away is mostly a teenage phenomenon but around **one in five first run away before the age of 11.**
- Females are more likely to run away than males. However, males are more likely to start running away at an earlier age.
- Running away rates for young people from **different ethnic groups are broadly similar.**
- Young people in substitute care are over-represented amongst runaways in Scotland. **Two fifths (40%)** of those who had been in **care** at some point in their lives had run away compared to **9% of those who had never been accommodated.** However, running away was not always directly linked to young people's experiences of being looked after nor to the quality of care they received.

The Home Context

Young people are more likely to run away from problems they are experiencing in **step-families (14%)** and **lone parent families (16%)** than is the case for those living with **both birth parents (7%)**.

- Most commonly young people referred to **arguments and conflict**, often quite persistent, with parents or step-parents as underpinning their decision to run away, conflict was a major factor for **39%** of the young people.
- However, **emotional and physical abuse** and **feelings of neglect and rejection** were major reasons for almost **one in five (19%)** of those who ran away.
- The need to avoid **conflict between parents** or to escape **parents own problems** (drugs/alcohol dependence, mental health problems) was the main reason identified by a significant minority of young people (**11%**).

The Personal Context

- Young people who ran away were much more likely to report feelings of depression, loneliness, worry about the future, and low self-esteem than were non-runaways.
- 29% of runaways reported having problems with drugs compared to 7% of non-runaways.
- 28% of runaways reported having problems with alcohol compared to 6% of non-runaways.
- 21% of runaways reported having been in trouble with the police compared to 8% of non-runaways.

Young people's experiences of being away

- 28% of young people slept rough while away
- 38% stayed with friends
- 1 in 7 young people away for 2 nights or more admitted resorting to risky survival strategies while away (eg stealing, begging, scavenging and prostitution)
- 1 in 6 young people experienced either physical or sexual assault when missing overnight
- 18% of rough sleepers used risky survival strategies compared to 2% of those staying with friends or relatives
- 84% said being away gave them time to think
- 73% said running was a relief from pressure
- 37% felt frightened while away

ROC - Aims

- To minimise the risks associated with young people running away
- To link young people and families to appropriate support in order to improve outcomes

ROC Service - Outreach

2001 ROC Community Based Outreach Service

- 1:1 support, advice and advocacy
- Can be accessed independently of Refuge, with outreach support available also following period in Refuge.
- P.S.E. lessons in S2
- Aim to prevent further running

ROC - Refuge

- Refuge opened July 2004
- 3 bedded Refuge with access for young people with mobility issues

ROC Refuge – Admission Criteria

- Runaway
- Priority 12-15 years (vulnerable 16/17 yrs)
- Young person seeking Refuge – purpose
- Risk assessment
- Not requiring other accommodation

ROC - Working in Partnership

- Need to liaise with services as soon as young person accesses refuge due to short time scale
- Listening to young people - ROC and SWS
- Assessment is ongoing throughout refuge period
- Working alongside each other to determine the best outcome for young person

ROC Refuge – Issues identified

- Relationship breakdown
- physical abuse
- at risk sexually
- substance abuse issues
- Self-harm
- Eating disorders
- Offending
- Bereavement and loss
- Mental health issues

ROC Refuge - Assessment

- “This stay highlighted what was going on in the young person’s life. In actual fact it uncovered much deeper issues. Assessment highlighted emotional abuse - turned things around – we realised it wasn’t safe for the young person to go home, something we wouldn’t have noticed previously”.
Social Worker

ROC Refuge - Outcomes

- A safe place to go
- Time to plan for safe supported future
- Access to services
- Ongoing appropriate support
- Developing resilience

Running Away & Youth Homelessness

- Break down in familial relationships
- Disrupted education
- Traumatic experiences
- Inappropriate relationships
- Health & Wellbeing Issues

The Future

- Secure funding for existing provision
- Continue to disseminate information and research
- 1 in 9 –The Scottish Coalition for Young Runaways

CONTACT

To refer young people to Outreach

Monday – Friday 0900-1700hrs

0141 550 2398

To refer young people to Refuge

08702 40 38 24 -24 hours

Freephone Number for Young People

0800 783 6686

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