



The  
Children's  
Society



# Thinking of running away?

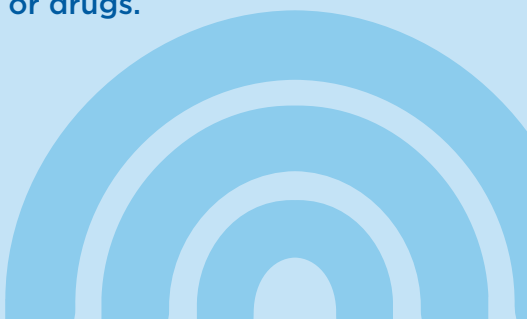
A guide for children and young people



Do you sometimes find that everything gets too much?

Do you think sometimes that the only answer is running away?

People run away for all sorts of reasons. You may be thinking of running away because of:

- Arguments with your family
  - Changes in your family that you're unhappy about
  - Violence at home
  - Physical or sexual abuse
  - Your parent's drug or alcohol abuse
  - A parent's mental health problems
  - Problems at school, or being bullied
  - Becoming pregnant
  - Cultural reasons (for example, your family may be trying to force you to marry)
  - Being in care
  - Upset or stress at home, such as a family death
  - Problems with alcohol or drugs.
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## What are the risks of running away?

**Running away may feel like the answer but it can be dangerous.**

- Children and young people who run away can be hurt or harmed while they're away.
- Many young people we spoke to slept rough or stayed with someone they had just met.
- They may do things that can put themselves in danger while away from home, like stealing or begging to survive.
- Being on the streets or in an unsafe place means there is a danger of being raped, or being sexually exploited. Children and young people are at risk of being talked into doing sexual acts in return for affection, money, drugs, alcohol, gifts or a place to stay.



## What should you do if you are thinking of running away?

- **Talk to someone** – ideally an adult you trust, it could be a grandparent or aunt, your school nurse or the parents of your friends. See if you can find a better solution to your problems than running away.
- **Talk to someone who understands the things you're going through** – contact details for Runaways Helpline and ChildLine are at the end of this leaflet.

## What can you do if you're worried about someone who's thinking of running away?

- **Talk to them** about what's wrong and see if together you can find a better solution – running away may look like the solution but it can be dangerous. Speak to an adult you trust as soon as possible – it could be a relative, a teacher, your school nurse or your family doctor.
- If your friend has run away or you think they may be about to, then **talk to a trusted adult** as soon as possible.

## Janine's story

**Janine ran away first when she was 13:**

'I was the golden child. I used to go to school every day, but then I got bullied. I missed a lot of year 7 because I pretended to be ill so I didn't have to face them. Instead of going to school I started hanging around in town, mixing with the wrong people.'

Janine's new friends encouraged her to stay out all night and to try drink and drugs.

'Running away broke my mum's heart. I'd come home and she'd be crying but because I was so high on drugs I wouldn't take any notice. My mum nearly had a nervous breakdown.'

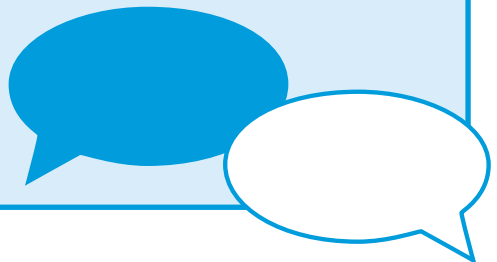
Janine was vulnerable and people much older than she was put her into some dangerous situations.

'I went to a drug dealer's house with a friend... The guy picked me up and put me in his room. I don't want to say what happened next. Afterwards I tried to get home but I didn't know what day it was, I didn't know where I was and I didn't have any money.'

Janine finds this time difficult to talk about but she was helped by her project worker at The Children's Society:

**'it's important to have people to talk to.'**

We managed to help Janine, but not before she had been through some horrific experiences. If you are worried or in danger then please talk to a trusted adult or contact one of the organisations overleaf.



## Where can you go for help?

You may be scared to go home, but it might be the best way to sort out any problems. Try and phone your parent or carer and tell them you are safe and are coming home. If you feel that your home is not safe for you, then there are people who can help.

**Runaway helpline** is free, confidential and 24/7. The helpline is for anyone under 18 years old who has run away from home and needs help and advice. You can also use the helpline if you're thinking about running away.

They can help you get a message back to your parents to let them know that you're safe. All contact is confidential, and they can't find out where you are unless you choose to tell them.

- **Call or text: 116 000**
- **Email: 116000@missingpeople.org.uk**

You can text them even if you have no credit left on your mobile phone.

They will talk to you in confidence to explain your options and try to get you the help you want. They won't tell anybody you have called them unless you want them to.

**ChildLine** advisers are trained to help with any problems that you're having at home that are making you think about running away. Calls to ChildLine are completely confidential and free, even if you call from a mobile phone.

- **Call 0800 1111**
- **Visit [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)**



The Children's Society has been working with young runaways for many years. In 2011, we published a study, *Still Running 3*, about how many children run away across the country. We found out that 100,000 children are still running away from home, or are forced to leave every year.

To download a copy of this leaflet, visit:  
[www.childrensociety.org.uk/resources](http://www.childrensociety.org.uk/resources)