

East Sussex Return Home Interview and Advocacy Service

Delivered by Missing People

Annual Report: July 2015 to 31st March 2016



Contents

1. Executive summary	2
2. Project infrastructure and planning: progress to date	3
2.1. Staffing	3
2.2. Volunteers	3
3. Project delivery: progress to date	3
3.1. The independent voice	3-4
3.2. Referrals	4
3.3. Delivery	5-6
3.4. Time taken (within 24 hours)	6
3.5. Weekend team	6
3.6. Risk indicators identified	7
3.7. Safeguarding	7-8
4. Added value	8
4.1. 1-1 support – referrals	8
4.2. 1-1 support – delivery/case studies	9-10
4.3. Family support	11
4.4. Uptake of the 24 hour helpline	11
4.5. Publicising the project in East Sussex	12
7. Future of the project	12
8. Appendix 1	13

1. Executive Summary

The charity Missing People is the UK's only charity dedicated solely to missing children and their parents & carers nationally. We are specialists with over 20 years' experience in supporting this highly vulnerable group. 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year, we work across the UK to reconnect missing children with a safe place and to provide a space for them to explore their options and problems without judgement.

We are commissioned by East Sussex County Council to provide a Return Home Interview Service and a 1-1 Support to children and young people across East Sussex between July 2015 and 31st March 2016.

Return Home Interviews (RHIs) are being offered to children and young people under the age of 18 who have been missing. RHIs aim to find out why young people went missing, what happened while they were away, and what support they need to be safe and prevent them going missing again.

Missing People took part in the Railway Children's research report into the Social Return of Investment for return home interviews. The cost finding was that £1 invested in RHIs and follow-up support achieves a social value of between £3 and £7, with a best estimate of £5.27. The report showed that of the young people receiving a RHI, 73% of their parents or carers said they had reduced stress. Positive outcomes for stakeholders were; safeguarding, achieving shared objectives, costs savings when missing episodes reduced and provided with police intelligence.

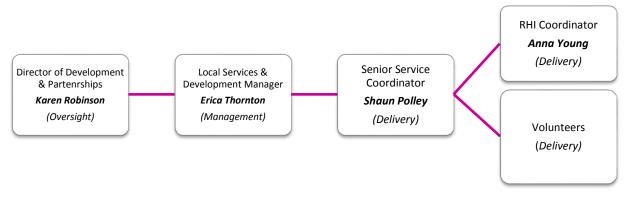
The 1-1 Support is offered to young people identified as vulnerable due to their missing experiences and provides one to one tailored support to help reduce their risk of harm.

East Sussex County Council recently led the jointly commissioned Pan Sussex Missing Children's Service. We were successful in winning this three year contract and are delighted to continue working in partnership with East Sussex County Council to improve outcomes for vulnerable children, ensure independence and enhance all partners' ability to safeguard and reduce risk to missing children.

This report sets out delivery and impact between July 2015 and 31st March 2016 and demonstrates how embedded our service is in management of risk to missing & exploited children.

2. Project infrastructure and planning: progress to date

2.1. Staffing



2.2. Volunteers

Our two fully trained volunteers began delivering RHIs in December 2015 and helped meet and greet Pan Sussex candidates for the second round interviews at our Head Office. We recruited seven new volunteers in December giving us a volunteer team of nine. They began their induction in January 2016, due to the tender process we have delayed the full training until our Pan Sussex staff are in place. Our volunteer team will conduct RHIs and support

"I think having a volunteer come to see me is great because they aren't being paid to be there...they must really want to be there"

Young person (15)

the administration of the project alongside the staff team. We plan to

recruit more volunteers across Sussex and Surrey over the next three months. All our volunteers will have an enhanced DBS check and 35 hours of training and induction in readiness for their roles.

3. Project Delivery: Progress to Date

3.1. The independent voice

In East Sussex we are pleased to be working in partnership with children's services and understand that there are occasions when another professional such as the social worker will be the most appropriate person to offer that young person a RHI.

Research tells us that missing and runaway children respond positively when a truly independent and neutral person offers them a Return Home Interview¹. In this context, many children define 'independence' as someone who works outside of the statutory sector and who has no 'official' powers or involvement in their care. For example, some young runaways 'feel more secure [talking to other services], because they need to have your permission to tell anyone, unless they think you're at risk².

Here to Listen - Children's Society 2013

Smeaton, E. (2013) Running from hate to what you think is love: The relationship between running away and child sexual exploitation London: Barnardo's and Paradigm Research

Our team have worked with Social Workers in East Sussex who share this experience, and often encourage our staff to approach the young person in the hope that this independence encourages disclosure. We have also conducted joint visits with Social Worker as a means of facilitating positive interaction either way.

Most importantly, we like to promote choice, and when a young person has a professional they would prefer to see – like a Social Worker or police officer - we encourage this to happen and lend our support as needed.

"My experience of Missing People has been very positive. They are skilled in working alongside young people and advocating their views and experiences whilst having an holistic view of their situations and the risks present"

Sharna Cass, MASH Manager

3.2. Referrals

484 missing episodes have been referred out of 521 missing between July 2015 and 31st March 2016, an average of 12 per week. East Sussex County Council commissioned Missing People to offer RHIs for 425 missing episodes in this time; therefore we have met and exceeded the requirements of the contract.

The referral procedure changed in the last quarter when we began receiving electronic notifications from COMPACT. This mechanism changed to help us save the administrative burden for the Police team and enabling us to reach young people soon after they return from being missing.

Sometimes young people choose to be seen by a Children's Services worker because of their preexisting relationship. On other occasions police or social workers feel it would not be appropriate for us to conduct the RHI if, for example, the young person is under the age of eight.

"I think it is important that we have been able to develop good working relationships with the Missing People team within the MASH as we have continued to liaise, assess and monitor the CSE risks to young people in East Sussex, my responsibility being the Hastings and Rother area, this then provides us with clear opportunities to make clear decisions and respond within the 72 hour timescales within our child protection guidelines"

Paula Black, MASH Manager

As soon as we are aware that a young person has returned from being missing the team attempt to make contact with a young person up to three times to offer them an RHI. The interviews are designed to gather information on why a young person was missing, what happened while missing and to assess their support needs so that relevant services and support can be put in place to prevent future harm and future missing incidents.

3.3. Delivery

Since July 2015 we were able to reach and *offer a service to 77%* of all missing episodes. *56% of young people* offered an RHI *received an interview* with 61% being the highest take-up rate in Q3.



Highlights for the year to date:

- We have achieved **56%** *uptake* of young people agreeing to a Return Home Interview
- We have *reached 77% of individuals referred* to the service

We have *offered a service to 93% (n484) of all missing children incidents* in East Sussex. While 12% *(n113) of those referred were unreachable,* we have written to these young people to let them and their parents & carers know we are here 24/7 in case they decide they would like to access our support. Of the children we offered a service to, we managed to *reach 77% (n374)* and verbally offer the service. Of these;

- 55% (n211) of episodes young people agreed to a Return Home Interview
- 31% (n119) of episodes young people declined a Return Home Interview
- 11% (n44) of episodes parents or carers declined a Return Home Interview for their child

In October 2015 we began collecting data for time taken, individuals, legal status, schools and risk indicators which is displayed in more detail in various charts and graphs in this report. Tables containing detailed breakdowns of the number of return home interviews completed by age, sex, legal status, LAC status, school are contained in Appendix 1 (page 12).

3.4. Time taken (72 hours)

Highlight for January to March 2016:

- 67% of episodes young people were *contacted within 72 hours* of referral
- 55% of RHIs were delivered within 72 hours of referral
- 85% of RHIs were delivered within 5 consecutive days of referral

In October 2015 we began recording the time it takes to make contact with a young person from after they return from a missing episode. We continued to monitor the time it took to contact from the time we received the notification from police because it wasn't until 8th December that we began to receive notifications directly from COMPACT. Missing People are now able to attempt contact with from soon after the time of return.

The data below shows how successful we have been in making contact with young people soon after they return from a missing episode. The number of episodes relates to the number of times we were able to capture this information. You will see from the chart below that we conducted

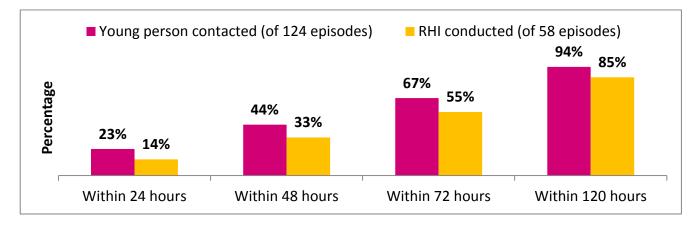


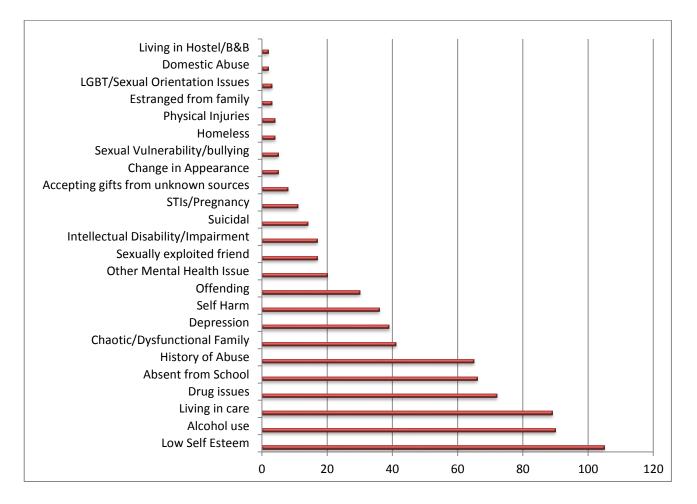
Table relates to data collected between Jan 2016 and March 2016

3.5. Weekend team

After successfully winning the contract to deliver RHIs across Sussex and Surrey we were able to recruit two Telephone RHI Coordinators who are based at our head office in London. They work weeked shifts, taking new referrals from Police and making contact with all young people and their families. This ensures that we deliver a seven day a week service and better safeguards those young people going missing over the weekend. This will also increase capacity to reach the 72 hour deadline.

3.6. Risk Indicators Identified

Since October 2015 (approx. 110 RHIs) we have recorded any of the OCC's list of risk indicators identified during an RHI. We anticipate this analysis will develop as we move into a Pan Sussex level of delivery. The chart below relates to risk indicators identified during each missing episode.

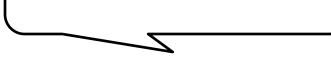


3.7. Safeguarding

96% of children gave us **permission to share every word** they told us during the RHI! Understanding why young people run away is essential to assessing risk and planning for the future safeguarding of that child. We find out why children ran away by working in a child-led way so that the child feels safe to talk to us. We have over 20 years' experience of working in this empowering way, gaining the trust of children by employing and training non-judgemental and highly skilled people

who will support them to open up and accept help. As a result, 96% of children give us permission to share every word they told us with statutory partners. If we had a concern that a child was at risk of significant serious harm, we would breach confidentiality if we were unsuccessful in getting their consent and work together with you to keep them safe from harm. We ensure that every child we meet is 100% clear on what will happen with the personal information they have shared, who will see it and what will happen next. We pride ourselves on the care we take to do this and children tell us it makes them feel safe in our hands. We feel that it helps them tell us more which allows us to work with them to address any harm they may have suffered or be exposed to.

"I can talk openly because I know what's going to happen next. They never hide things from me" Young person (14)



When conducting RHIs we received information from young people on **15** occasions that we assessed as being a significant safeguarding concern, subsequently sharing with Children's Services and/or Sussex Police and completing a Statement of Referral for each.

4. Added Value

4.1. 1-1 Support Service: referrals

Missing People's 1-1 support is designed to give practical and emotional support to young people who have been missing and where the risk of harm increases due to their pattern of absconding. They may need support with issues such as self-esteem, safe relationships, bullying and safety planning. For the length of the contract we have provided **32** young people with 1-1 support which surpasses our contracted targeted of 25 young people provided with 1:1 support.

Aims of 1-1 support;

- identify goals with every young person we support and plan an intervention which helps achieve these goals
- see each child weekly for a minimum of six weeks and a maximum of nine months
- identify the push and pull factors causing their missing episodes and develop plans to address these
- Support young people to understand and be resilient to (for e.g.) safe relationships, family breakdown, living in care, exploitation, bullying, self-esteem etc.
- Speak up for young people who need assistance articulating their needs to parents, carers, social workers and other professionals.

4.2. 1-1 Support Service: delivery/case studies³

Amy (not real name), female, age 11

We first met with Amy for a return home interview in December 2015. Amy was a victim of domestic violence when she was younger and had difficulty control ling her emotions, as a result

she was frequently running away when she felt stressed or overwhelmed. Amy was particularly vulnerable as she seemed to have limited understanding of the risks posed to her whilst she was missing. Amy had also not engaged in education at mainstream school for three months. We were able to offer listening support not only to Amy but also to her mother who was having a difficult time managing Amy's behaviour. This support took place at the initial return home interview and at a follow up session in December.



We were able to help ensure Amy had a smooth transition to a more suitable school by providing weekly 1-1 support sessions to her at her new school over a period of 10 weeks. These support sessions gave Amy the chance to express her emotions and explore what "safety" means. Amy has completed a safety plan which helps her to identify who safe adults are (police/teachers/Mum) and what she can do if she feels like running away (calling the Runaway Helpline/talking to Mum).

Amy told us recently that she enjoyed her support sessions with Missing People as she thinks that tasks are fun but they also make her think about how to stay safe. Amy said she feels she can trust her Missing People support worker. We have been able to provide Amy with a consistent and reliable source of support through a difficult time for her and her family. We were also able to facilitate a handover to a long term support service for Amy to ensure that her emotional and education needs are met.

Since commencing support with Missing People Amy has not been reported missing again and said that if she feels she wants to run away in the future she has a better understanding of safety and how to manage her emotions.

³ Missing People always use composite case studies with the specific intention of avoiding anyone recognising themselves or their own clients. In this report, the composites are made up of East Sussex children.

Chloe (not real name), female, age 13

We first met Chloe for a return home interview in October. Chloe was running away because she was having problems at home (arguing with her parents) and she had also formed a new friendship group who were drinking and using cannabis.



Chloe said that during the initial meeting she felt able to talk openly and honestly about her feelings towards her family and her new friends because we explained we would only share information if there were risks involved. Chloe also disclosed her history of mental health problems and how she felt this was still a problem but she had no support in place to help manage it.

Following the RHI we were able to refer Chloe for long term mental health support

and offer her 1:1 support sessions whilst she was held on their waiting list. During this time we facilitated meetings between Chloe and her family to help foster a more positive relationship between them which also helped Chloe open up to her family about her mental health.

Throughout our time working with Chloe we were able to build a positive and trusting relationship, having frank and honest discussions about the risks associated with alcohol and drug use. We were able to address all the issues that Chloe raised at her initial return home interview and explore any further issues she was facing.

Chloe said Missing People helped her to open up to her family and be more honest with them. Chloe's mother said our involvement with the family has been positive and helped her to get appropriate help for Chloe. She also felt that whilst on the waiting list with mental health services it was important for Chloe and the family to have a consistent and reliable worker to contact.

4.3. Family support

We offer Missing People's Family Support service to all parents and carers we have met and spoken with as a result of our RHI and 1-1 Support Service. To date, we have met and spoken with around **half of the young people's parents and carers** when we have undertaken a RHI or delivered our 1-1 support, and offered our family support services, which include practical and emotional support and a bespoke counselling service. To date **18 family**

"You've been the only consistent face that she's seen since the start of all this, it's been good to have someone who she feels comfortable talking to. Whilst things still aren't great at home at least she knows you've been there"

Mother of young person

members have received face to face support and advice from the local team and many more are accessing help from our 24/7 Family Support workers. This includes advising parents on how to keep their children safe, how to report them missing and the 24/7 emotional support available from the charity.

4.4. Uptake of 24 hour helpline

We know that the helpline service has been well received by young people we have worked with in East Sussex and that a good proportion of children and parents we meet go on to use our 24/7 services.

We are offering our 24/7 free confidential helpline to all children, young people and parents we provide support to in East Sussex. Our helpline is confidential and callers can remain anonymous, so we will not always know whether they have accessed this service. Anecdotally, we believe that children and parents have used these services approximately 20⁴ times between July 2015 and March 2016.



We also know that we speak to between 15-20% of children in East Sussex who have received a



TextSafe[®] while they are missing. A TextSafe[®] is a supportive message that can be sent to a missing child's phone so they can reach the Runaway Helpline for free and confidential support. It lets the child or adult know how to reach help via phone, text and email 24 hours a day. Currently, Sussex police uses TextSafe[®] around 20-30 times per month and some of these uses will be for East Sussex children.

We are working with Sussex police to help them increase uptake of this service which is proven to

safeguard and reconnect missing children. Furthermore, we know that when we have had contact with a child while they are missing it also makes the offer of an RHI upon their return more likely to be accepted.

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⁴ Estimated number based on feedback from young people, parents and Missing People staff

4.5. Publicising the project in East Sussex

Schools and Colleges:

- Schools remain the most common place for the team to conduct Return Home Interviews and are welcoming and supportive of the service.
- We delivered group work in Bexhill Academy to try and engage a young person who was going missing regularly but did not want to engage one to one with any professional
- Through our time in East Sussex we have visited numerous schools and colleges to raise awareness of the issues of missing and how they can access support for students.

East Sussex County Council:

• The team promoted the service to professionals in children's services teams across East Sussex between July 2015 and March 2016. Some teams were visited more than once and daily/weekly contact was maintained with managers and social workers whose children we supported.

Posters and 116000 Runaway Helpline cards are regularly handed out to Children's Services professionals, Police, schools and young people



Our newly re-branded 'Runaway Helpline' launched on 21st October 2015 as a way to tailor our branding for our 24/7 helpline to children and young people. The number is the same as the Missing People helpline number; 116000, and can be reached by call or text (for free) 24 hours a day. Due to the regular promotion of our core services we have also seen an increase in;

- Poster Partner sign ups; a network of businesses and premises' who join the search for missing children and adults by displaying posters,
- Support Partner Network members; a network of professional agencies who work with vulnerable people (for e.g. hostels, soup kitchens, health centres etc.) who receive notifications about vulnerable missing children and adults in their area and are skilled-up by us about how to support a missing person, and;
- Child Rescue Alert sign ups; a network of members of the public who agree to receive text message alerts in the event that a Child Rescue Alert is issued by police for a very high risk missing child
- TextSafe[®], Family Support and Publicity; all of these services are being used more frequently by Sussex police meaning we can help to find and reconnect more missing children in East Sussex, and support their loved ones left behind

5. Future of the project

We are delighted to be chosen to deliver the Pan Sussex Missing Children Service (April 2016 to March 2019) enabling us to continue working in partnership with East Sussex County Council to improve outcomes, safeguard and minimise risk to missing children.

Author and contacts at the charity:

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	Year (July '15	5 - March '16)	Q4 (Jar	ı - Mar)	Q 3 (Oct	- Dec)	Q 2 (July - Sep)
Total number of							
	Episodes	Individuals	Episodes	Individuals	Episodes	Individuals	Episodes
		Q3&4 only					
Missing	521		178	n/k	179	104	164
Referred ⁵	484		161	77	168	99	155
% of missing	93%		90%		94%	95%	93%
Reached ⁶	375		124	55	118	70	132
% of referred ⁷	77%		77%	71%	84%	84%	85%
Completed	211		59	22	72	40	80
% of reached	56%		48%	40%	61%	57%	61%
Young Person Declined	119		49	22	35	18	35
% of reached	32%		40%	40%	30%	26%	27%
Parent/carer declined	44		16	11	11	8	17
% of reached	12%		13%	20%	9%	11%	13%
Unreachable	58		27	12	21	12	10
% of referred	12%		30%	16%	13%	12%	8%
Social Worker dealing ⁸	14		3	3	11	6	0
% of referred	3%		2%	4%	7%	6%	0%
Other professional doing RHI	37		7	7	17	10	13
% of referred	8%		4%	9%	10%	10%	8%
Outstanding	0		0	0	1	1	0
% of referred					0.6%	1%	0%

 ⁵ 6% of missing not referred because Police assess it is not appropriate or another professional is permanently assigned to be dealing with all RHIs
⁶ Total = Referred – (Unreachable + Social Worker dealing + Other professional dealing + outstanding) – see chart on Page8 for time taken
⁷ Total = Referred – (Social Worker dealing + Other professional dealing)

⁸ Referred to MASH due to high no. of referrals or SW deemed most appropriate to deal

		Number	of completed;	by location			
	Year t	Year to date		Q4		Q3	Q2
	Episodes	Individuals Q3&4 only	Episodes	Individuals	Episodes	Individuals	Episodes
Hastings & Rother	102 (48%)		31 (53%)	9 (41%)	30 (42%)	18 (45%)	41 (51%)
Lewes & Wealden	73 (35%)		15 (25%)	9 (41%)	20 (28%)	11 (27.5%)	38 (48%)
Eastbourne	36 (17%)		13 (22%)	4 (18%)	22 (30%)	11 (27.5%)	1 (1%)
		Numb	er of completed	d; by age			
	Year t	o date	Q4	Q4		Q3	Q2
	Episodes	Episodes	Episodes		Episodes	Individuals	Episodes
11	3 (1%)		1 (1%)	1	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (2%)
12	6 (3%)		0	0	2 (3%)	2 (5%)	4 (5%)
13	15 (7%)		5 (8%)	2	3 (4%)	2 (5%)	8 (10%)
14	84 (40%)		30 (51%)	6	34 (47%)	20 (50%)	20 (25%)
15	49 (23%)		7 (12%)	6	19 (26%)	10 (25%)	23 (29%)
16	37 (18%)		8 (14%)	3	10 (14%)	5 (13%)	19 (24%)
17	16 (8%)		8 (14%)	2	4 (6%)	1 (2%)	4 (5%)
		Numbe	r of completed;	by gender			
	Year t	Year to date		Q4		Q3	Q2
	Episodes	Individuals Q3&4 only	Episodes	Individuals	Episodes	Individuals	Episodes
Male	41 (19%)		11 (19%)	5 (23%)	17 (24%)	13 (32%)	13 (16%)
Female	170 (71%)		48 (71%)	17 (77%)	55 (76%)	27 (68%)	67 (84%)
		Number o	of completed; by	/ legal status			
	Year t	Year to date		4		Q3	Q2
	Episodes (Total LAC not all broken	Individuals Q3&4 only	Episodes	Individuals	Episodes	Individuals	Episodes

	down)						
Total LAC(Q2 not all broken down)	136 (64%)		26 (44%)	10	46 (64%)	24 (60%)	64 (80%)
East Sussex LAC (not all broken down)	44 (22%)		14 (24%)	7	18 (25%)	8 (20%)	12 (15%)
Other LA LAC (not all broken down)	50 (24%)		12 (20%)	3	28 (39%)	16 (40%)	10 (12%)
Child In Need	11 (5%)		10 (17%)	4	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)
Early Help	22 (10%)		3 (5%)	2	17 (24%)	9 (22%)	2 (3%)
Not open to any agency	11 (5%)		4 (7%)	2	4 (5%)	4 (10%)	3 (4%)
Not yet known	3 (1%)		0	0	2 (3%)	1 (3%)	1 (1%)
Not recorded	70 (33%)		16 (27%)	4	3 (4%)	2 (5%)	51 (64%)
		Number of	completed LAC;	by LAC status			
	Year t	o date	Q4		Q3		Q2
	Episodes	Individuals Q3&4 only	Episodes	Individuals	Episodes	Individuals	Episodes
IH Foster	21 (15%)		1 (4%)	1	11 (24%)	8 (33%)	9 (14%)
IH Residential	32 (24%)		7 (27%)	3	5 (11%)	5 (21%)	20 (31%)
Private Foster	15 (11%)		3 (11%)	2	3 (6%)	2 (8%)	9 (14%)
Private Residential	38 (28%)		8 (31%)	2	16 (35%)	7 (30%)	14 (22%)
Supported Lodgings	8 (6%)		0	0	7 (15%)	1 (4%)	1 (2%)
Not recorded	22 (16%)		7 (27%)	2	4 (9%)	1 (4%)	11 (17%)
	_	Number of c	completed; by so	hool attended			
	Year to date		Q4		Q3		Q2
	Episodes Q3 only	Individuals Q3&4 only	Episodes	Individuals	Episodes	Individuals	Episodes
Beacon Community College	4		3	1	1	1	n/a
Bexhill High School	21		17	1	4	3	n/a
Cuckmere School	1		0	0	1	1	n/a

Eastbourne Academy	2	0	0	2	1	n/a
FLESS	1	0	0	1	1	n/a
Hailsham Community College	1	0	0	1	1	n/a
Hastings Academy	1	0	0	1	1	n/a
Hastings College	1	0	0	1	1	n/a
Heathfield Community College	1	0	0	1	1	n/a
Helenswood Academy	5	2	2	3	1	n/a
Peacehaven Community School	12	9	4	3	1	n/a
Robertsbridge CC	5	1	1	4	1	n/a
Seaford Head School	1	1	1	1	1	n/a
Seahaven Academy	1	0	0	1	1	n/a
St Richard's Catholic College	1	1	1	1	1	n/a
Willingdon Community School	1	0	0	1	1	n/a
ARK William Parker Academy	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Chailey School	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Claverham Community College	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Gildredge House	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Priory School	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Ratton School	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Ringmer Community College	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Rye College	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Rye Studio School	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
The Bishop Bell CofE School	1	1	1	0	0	n/a
The Causeway School	1	1	1	0	0	n/a
The Cavendish School	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
The Eastbourne Academy	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
The Hastings Academy	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
The St Leonards Academy	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Uckfield CTC	0	0	0	0	0	n/a

Uplands Community College 0	0 0	0 0	n/a
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