



Additional Information: Missing People

1. Background

- 1.1 Missing People is a key priority in the PCC's Police and Crime Plan 2016-2021
Below is the narrative from the latest Police and Crime Plan 2016-2021
(Refreshed 2018):
- 1.2 *"West Yorkshire Police deals with nearly 5,000 missing person calls every year, 20% of which are considered to be "high-risk". The reasons why people go missing are complex and can be linked to their mental health, emotional or physical abuse, or exploitation. Every time a person goes missing, the police are put under great pressure to find them and work with partners to keep them safe. We need to work better together to tackle the root causes and prevent people from going missing in the first place, this will not only reduce the risk of harm for the individual but will also reduce the demand on our police service."*
- 1.3 Prior to this in the Police and Crime Plan 2013-2018 it was incorporated in the outcome on 'Safeguarding against violent and serious crime' and 'Local, regional and national threats, risks and harms are tackled' as part of the section on 'Reaching out to people at risk'. This Plan highlighted that Safeguarding was one of the highest priorities for the police and partners and is an area of work that is subject to increased scrutiny and acknowledgment for national guidance and policy.

2. The National Picture

- 2.1 The National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) give the following definition for 'Missing':
- "Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another"¹*
- They have also provided the following definition for those classified as 'Absent':
- "A person not at a place where they are expected or required to be and there is no apparent risk"²*

¹ Missing Persons Data Report 2015/2016, UK Missing Persons Bureau, National Crime Agency, December 2017, Version 3.3

² Missing Persons Data Report 2015/2016, UK Missing Persons Bureau, National Crime Agency, December 2017, Version 3.3

- 2.2 All reports of missing people sit within a continuum of risk from 'no apparent risk (absent) through to high-risk cases that require immediate intensive action.'³
- 2.3 The statistics in the below box are the latest to be published by the Missing Persons Bureau at the National Crime Agency during December 2017.

During 2015/16 there were nationally 377,710 calls to the Police Service of England and Wales and Scotland.

Across 42 English and Welsh police forces, there were 337,640 missing and absent related calls, of which 242,317 were created as and related to 134,757 missing individuals; an average of 368 people per day.

Missing Persons Data Report 2015/2016, UK Missing Persons Bureau, National Crime Agency, December 2017, Version 3.3

- 2.4 This bureau is the UK's national and international point of contact for all missing person and unidentified body cases. Working with all UK police forces but also with international police services.
- 2.5 The charity 'Missing People' estimate that someone will be reported missing every 90 seconds and over the course of a year this equates to 1 in 200 children going missing and 1 in every 500 adults going missing. Of these young people 1 in 10 will be looked after children and these children will be reported missing an average of 6 times.⁴

Missing People APP – College of Policing

- 2.6 The APP was introduced to ensure all cases of missing people were investigated effectively, with a greater degree of consistency being applied to risk assessments and provided increased clarity on the definition of missing and risk categories.
- 2.7 Going missing should be treated as an indicator that the individual may be at risk of harm and the reasons for a person deciding to go missing may be complex and linked to a variety of social or family issues. The Missing People APP outlines that there are 3 key factors that should be considered in a missing person investigation:
- protecting those at risk of harm
 - minimising distress and ensuring high quality of service to the families and carers of missing persons
 - prosecuting those who perpetrate harm or pose a risk of harm when this is appropriate and supported by evidence⁵

³ Missing Persons, Major investigation and public protection, Authorised Professional Practice (APP), College of Policing, <https://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/major-investigation-and-public-protection/missing-persons/>

⁴ Key information, Missing People <https://www.missingpeople.org.uk/about-us/about-the-issue/research/76-keyinformation2.html>

⁵ Missing Persons, Major investigation and public protection, Authorised Professional Practice (APP), College of Policing, <https://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/major-investigation-and-public-protection/missing-persons/>

- 2.8 As part of the APP a table has been produced as a guide to the appropriate level of police response based on initial and ongoing risk assessment for each case and alongside this a process chart for consideration.
- 2.9 As part of all missing person cases there are 6 minimum actions as detailed below:
- create a record on the force command and control system, and/or the force missing person reporting system
 - complete a risk assessment and use this to inform what actions will be taken and when (if risk levels change the response should be reviewed)
 - create and record a plan of immediate actions, which may include checking friends/relatives etc. It should be agreed and documented if these actions will be undertaken by police or the reporting person, depending on the circumstances of the incident
 - set the latest time to review the risk assessment and activity, based on the circumstances of the report. The reasoning for this time frame should be clearly documented and the informant advised. The review may take place before the latest time if new information comes to light
 - circulate the person as missing on PNC and check to determine if the person may be in custody
 - if the missing person is aged under 18, local children's services must be notified (immediately if deemed to be at high risk)
- 2.10 As expected, all cases should be subject to review and at each review point the risk assessment will also need to be reconsidered. When searching for children or adults in care, multi-agency safeguarding partners should be approached for information to inform the risk assessment and any ongoing activity.

3. Work of the West Yorkshire PCC and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)

- 3.1 During December 2016, a workshop was hosted by the PCC and Chief Constable on Missing People to bring together a wide range of partners to discuss the issue and how it could be tackled using a partnership approach. This event was also used to launch the new Police and Crime Plan 2016-2021.
- 3.2 There were over 70 attendees from both statutory and non-statutory organisations, including representation from Ofsted, community groups, charities and service users to look at the root causes of why people went missing and how to work better collectively to prevent incidents in the first place.
- 3.3 When considering the barriers to current activity information sharing between partners and real time access to information was highlighted at the main issue, followed by demand it being a 24/7 issue for the police and the problems created when other services or organisations were only available 9-5, often Monday to Friday. It was felt that better education was needed on when somebody should be reported missing, with some cases being too early and some too late and this extended to staff working within partner organisations or care facilities for both children or adults. There was also work needed to bridge the gaps in communication and to develop provision for those with a history of going missing as a child to assist with the transition period from child/young person to adult,

when individuals would be passed from child services to adult who operate separately from each other.

- 3.4 A number of next steps were identified at the event, many of which have been or are being progressed such as;
- working with partners to create of a 'West Yorkshire problem profile' to see the current situation
 - identifying options for co-located staff and live time intelligence or information sharing within the police control rooms
 - making contact with Private Care Homes/Children's Home providers to build relationships
- 3.5 The PCCs Safer Communities Fund has funded 10 projects worth £41,035.00 that have a missing people focus. One such project was a communications campaign in conjunction with West Yorkshire Police.
- 3.6 During early 2017 development of a new campaign was commenced through the Safeguarding Communications Group and consultation with young people took place during March, with the aim of understanding why young people may run away. Further consultation with young people on effective design and artwork was progressed during April so that materials would attract attention from the target audience of young people aged 12-17 years. The ongoing campaign called 'Running away is not the answer' was launched on International Missing Children's Day on 25 May and received a good response on social media, appearing on Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat to try and reach a younger audience.

4. Work of West Yorkshire Police

- 4.1 Responding to reports of missing people is a major priority for West Yorkshire Police and represents a significant challenge both in terms of the intense resource implications such investigations can entail and the preventative work which may be required to break the cycle of repeat missing from episodes some individuals, and particularly some vulnerable children, can be locked in.
- 4.2 Missing Best Practice meetings are held quarterly and chaired by WYP. They include representation from the OPCC, Care Managers and district based officers. One initiative from this group has been ongoing pilots to host care managers and social workers from local authorities in district control rooms to provide access to existing council records particularly for those young people in care or known to social services and help reduce the amount of time taken to locate children who are absent or missing.
- 4.3 Strong links have been established with Ofsted, as 35.7% of young people who go missing are in care and care homes must be both registered and regulated by Ofsted. Ofsted now provide a monthly report of all registered children's homes to WYP for cross referencing with police data sets so that relationships can be built with the owners and so further intervention can be provided in problematic locations.
- 4.4 All architectural liaison officers have been briefed on new and emerging homes that are seeking planning permissions from the local authority in order to look at risk based builds and so that an appropriate design is recommended to ensure children are placed in a safe environment.

- 4.5 Monthly performance data is considered on all the cases that fall into the 'No apparent risk' category to check the continued appropriate use of this category against force policy and to identify any individuals who fall under this category that are regularly missing.
- 4.6 The work being undertaken by the force Vulnerability Crime Reduction Officer in conjunction with Huddersfield University will link directly to West Yorkshire Police's Protecting Vulnerable People Plan, the PCC's Police and Crime Plan and the West Yorkshire Police's Early Intervention Strategy and provide a focus on adverse child experiences (ACEs)

5. Community Outcomes Meetings - Holding the Chief Constable to Account

- 5.1 Reports to COM on Missing People have been considered by the PCC since early-2016 and during this time the PCC has sought a range of assurances from the Chief Constable and Chief Officer Team. This has included asking questions on:
- Procedures for continued investigation and review of long term missing persons
 - The actual number of residential homes in West Yorkshire risks around unaccompanied migrant children and if the potential links to human trafficking were being addressed
 - The increase in Harbourers warnings given out in 2015 and the increased focus on CSE and safeguarding and whether WYP felt resources were at a right level.
 - Whether Customer Contact Centre staff had been updated on APP guidelines
 - Examples on what forensic samples may need to be obtained for a missing person
 - Reporting restriction for teachers who may have been accused of abduction
 - The actual number of residential homes in West Yorkshire for children as both 88 and 107 were quoted
 - Whether any best practice could be adopted from the approach applied to missing children and young people, to improve the processes for missing adults
 - Whether the Directors of Children's Service were supportive of the research ongoing with children who had been missing and whether links were in place for concerns to be fed back to Ofsted.
 - Any identified outcomes from the Child Rescue Alert mentioned in the report.