



WEST YORKSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

14 September 2018

Performance Update – Missing People

Introduction

This report aims to provide an overview of activity against delivery of the Police and Crime Plan. Each Police and Crime Panel meeting will focus on one priority from the Plan, looking at the five areas identified below. Additional briefing papers will be provided where applicable however this summary will pull together key information from the briefing papers under the relevant sections.

Background/Context

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):

“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.”

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.

Progress and Key Challenges

2014: Policy which mandated West Yorkshire Police's management of missing incidents was adopted during May 2014 and was in-line with national guidance. It contained the below definition of a missing person:

Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and:

1. *The characteristics are out of character or*
2. *The context suggests the person may be:*
 - *Subject of crime; or*
 - *At risk of harm to themselves or another; or*
3. *They are not at a place where they are expected or required to be but are not expected to suffer or cause harm.*

2015: In February all 5 local councils and the police agreed a Joint Protocol for children missing from home or care. This detailed the procedures agencies would implement in order to safeguard children by preventing them going missing and how they would jointly respond if they did, including information sharing arrangements and multi-agency planning meetings. WYP also recognised the 'Herbert Protocol' which was intended to speed up and simplify the police and partner response when a vulnerable person with dementia or Alzheimer's were reported missing.

In 2015 there were 15,086 missing or absent incident reports recorded in West Yorkshire relating to 7,504 people

- **63% related to people under 18**
- **32% relate to people aged 18-64**
- **4% related to people 65 or over**
- **0.5% age not recorded**

2016 – The first report looking at 'Missing People' was scrutinised at the Community Outcomes meeting in March 2016. This report highlighted that the volume of missing incidents had increased from 5,608 in 2013 to 15,086 just 2 years later in 2015 and whilst this could be largely explained as a result of changes to WYP's Missing Person's policy this also meant increased demands on resources.

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. Details are available in the attached 'Additional Information' paper.

2017 – The Missing Persons Authorised Professional Practice (APP) was launched by the College of Policing in January which provided updated guidance based on previous information from the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO). Detail on some of the specific points within the APP can be found in the 'Additional Information' paper.

The National Crime Agency (NCA) data for 2015/16 was published on 28 February 2017 and updated again in December for the same year.

During early 2017 development of a new communications campaign was commenced through the Safeguarding Communications Group and consultation with young people took place during March before the campaign was launched to coincide with International Missing Children's Day on 25 May. Funding for this campaign was achieved through the Safer Communities Fund

A meeting was held in May to finalise the report following the partner event in late 2016 and the outcomes and actions were discussed with safeguarding colleagues and a number of those actions were incorporated in the ongoing Missing Best Practice Meeting that takes place quarterly.

First meeting of the National Police Missing Group was held in November attended by a representative from WYP.

18,700 days of police time was spent in West Yorkshire looking for missing people during 2017/18 and on average a person was missing for 21 hours

2018 – A 3 month pilot was conducted to test amendments to the 'Misper 7' form which is the prevention interview with a returned child or adult conducted by the police. These changes were introduced to collect more useful information from the person to help prevent future incidents and put suitable interventions in place. This work was supported through ongoing work with Cambridge University and following evaluation showed

increased engagement with returning persons and the new form is currently being used across the Leeds district.

Interviews are currently taking place with children from Children's Homes to collect more information on the reasons for missing occurrences to help the police and partners have a better understanding and inform changes to processes to try and prevent future incidents. This work is being undertaken by WYP's Vulnerability Crime Reduction Officer and supported by Huddersfield University. One such interview revealed that a child in care would go missing in order to access the free Wi-Fi in McDonalds and incidents ended once the home installed Wi-Fi at the request of the police.

The OPCC have recently held the first dedicated meeting in West Yorkshire between data and performance analysts from both the police and local authorities, to focus on CSE and missing children in order to identify how the police and partners can better collate, share and use information and in turn influence how resources and interventions are deployed in order to help reduce risk and safeguard children. From this meeting an action plan is being developed and further meetings are being arranged for the coming year.

Key statistics:

Between April 2017 and March 2018 there were 21372 missing occurrences reported which represents a 5.5% increase on the previous year.

19% of those reported were graded as high risk and almost 2 thirds were children -

- **Over 25% of these children were at risk from child sexual exploitation**
- **37.5% of missing children were in care**
- **There are currently 88 residential children's homes within West Yorkshire which range from one bed to 16 bed short break services.**

Challenges: The issue of missing is hugely complex as it involves people in very different situations, from the rare of a child being abducted by force, to an adult who simply chooses to leave the family home, does not have any complex issues and so their behaviour is more difficult to predict.

This can often be a cross cutting issue and be a result of other vulnerabilities such as mental health issues or other complex needs, being in care and or feeling unsafe, unemployment, financial issues, or homelessness. It can also be linked to other risks such as exploitation and abuse including child sexual exploitation (CSE), child criminal exploitation (CCE), county lines, modern slavery and trafficking.

Based on long term trend data the demand continues to rise year on year.

In West Yorkshire there is a significant number of vulnerable persons and serious risks around services provided for vulnerable people, especially those with mental health issues, those who go missing from home and children who are looked after or in care. Connected to this is an increasing number of children's homes particularly those classified as private and those that are not Ofsted regulated as they provide provision for young people 16+ years old. Ofsted inspections have identified that the most common concern is regarding placement decisions, which may not be based on the known needs of the children or young people and whether staff within that facility can manage those needs.

Working with WYP and Partners

The Community Outcome Meetings (COM) between the Chief Constable and the Police and Crime Commissioner focus on important policing and community safety issues which are of a high public interest. The aim is to offer greater transparency to communities on how the PCC holds the Chief Constable to account on these important issues.

A report on Missing People is received twice yearly at COM as part of an agenda focused on the Plan outcome to 'Safeguarding Vulnerable People', with the latest being discussed on 19 June 2018. The draft minute from the meeting held on 19 June is attached as Appendix A, this minute is due to be agreed at the next COM meeting on 18 September. The reports and minutes are published on the PCC's website.

A senior representative from WYP attends the National Missing Working Group on behalf of West Yorkshire and the North East. A forum to share best practice and improve the police response to missing incidents and develop joint practice. This also provides an opportunity for the good work that is ongoing within West Yorkshire to influence the national picture.

Missing children and especially 'children who are looked after' is regularly discussed at the West Yorkshire CSE and Missing Group. Made up of representatives from each of the 5 district Local Children's Safeguarding Boards (LCSB), safeguarding leads from each of the police districts, other key stakeholders and whilst the group is managed by the OPCC, it has an independent Chair. The group exists to share best practice and develop collaborative and consistent ways of safeguarding children across all of West Yorkshire. Further detail is in the 'Additional Information' paper.

The PCC is represented on the quarterly police Safeguarding Board where a regular agenda item is 'Missing People and the response from police and partners'.

Aims and Future Delivery

The Priority Plan for Missing People is attached as Appendix B. These plans will be refreshed, renewed and are work in progress but we will report on our delivery against these Priority Plans in public facing Community Outcomes Meetings.

The West Yorkshire CSE and Missing Group is currently under review and a new strategy and terms of reference for the group is being developed in partnership. It is anticipated that this group will become a West Yorkshire Risk and Vulnerability Group to meet the ever emerging challenges across missing, CSE, CCE, county line, modern slavery and trafficking that should all be considered in complex and contextual safeguarding terms. The new focus and remit will enable the group to better influence the safeguarding of children in this period of increased awareness and understanding across the full landscape of safeguarding. With regards to missing children, it is envisaged that this holistic approach to the vulnerabilities of children will mean the reasons children go missing can be better identified and responded to using a partnership approach.

Following the data analyst and performance meeting held by the OPCC during 2018, an action plan is to be developed and future meetings are being organised.

The most common concern picked up as part of Ofsted inspections of residential children's home is poor placement of young people, particularly instances where these decisions are not based on the known needs of the children and whether staff within the home can manage these needs. West Yorkshire Police would like to be involved in the placement decision making process for children being placed in care homes in order to try and prevent these young people going missing due to poor placement decisions.

The West Yorkshire Protocol for missing children has been updated and is awaiting finalisation.

A cross government strategy is expected during 2018/early 2019 and a national action plan will accompany this. Clarification on expected timescales is being sought from the Home Office.

A national register for missing persons is under development and implementation is likely to be during Spring 2019

Resources and Funding

Each time a high risk person is reported missing the relevant police district will open a Special Operations Room (SOR), staffed with a dedicated controller from the district's Communication Room, a researcher from the Intelligence Unit and available CID resources which will be managed by the duty Detective Inspector. This team will set the direction of the investigation and tasks that need to be completed, with front line patrol then deployed to carry out these tasks allocated by the SOR.

The PCCs Safer Communities Fund has funded 10 projects worth £41,035.00 that have a missing people focus. During Grant Round 11, £5,000 was secured to expand the reach of the 'Running away is not the answer' campaign on social media, printed advertising in key areas and to produce videos to complement the artwork which had been developed. This project was due to complete in August 2018 but has had an extension of time to finish the editing of the videos which can be circulated once finalised.

A force profile for Missing has now been produced and details of instances of missing episodes from care homes is regularly shared with relevant district partners and LCSBs.

The OPCC currently match fund with Calderdale Council a Parent Liaison Officer provided by the charity Parents Against Child Sexual Abuse (PACE). Further details are in the 'Additional Information' paper.

An example of pioneering work is being carried out in Wakefield under Operation Erase, whereby 2 Police Community Support Officers are being utilised to work specifically with residential homes that are particularly problematic and demanding and regularly contact the police as a result. This work has been recognised as best police practice in the 'Ending the criminalisation of children in residential care. Briefing Two; best practice in policing' report published by the Howard League for Penal Reform in 2017.



COMMUNITY OUTCOMES MEETING

Tuesday 19th June 2018

PRESENT

Mark Burns-Williamson – West Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)

Jayne Sykes – Interim Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Dee Collins – Chief Constable (CC)

Catherine Hankinson – Assistant Chief Constable (ACC)

Matt Davison – Detective Superintendent (D Supt)

Warren Stevenson – Detective Chief Inspector (DCI)

APOLOGIES

John Robins – Deputy Chief Constable (DCC)

ALSO PRESENT

Celeste Armitage - Engagement Officer

Lois Latham – Police Volunteer

Pamela Quinn – Sergeant

8. Missing People

The CC introduced Item 8 and stated that they were still awaiting the National Protocol. She discussed the ongoing concerns around the ease of setting up care facilities in the county but that WYP were taking the opportunity to get proactively involved in the placement of children to ensure placements are appropriate and safe. She described missing as an area which collectively troubles us and that WYP try their best to reduce vulnerability and the reduction in demand could allow other areas of concern to receive more support.

ACC Hankinson presented the report which can be accessed [here](#).

ACC Hankinson informed the PCC that there was a consistent approach to assessing risk across the force. She described the increase of 5% in missing which equates to around 59 people missing per day; around 19% of which are high risk cases which take considerable resources to locate due to their additional needs. She also stated that 2/3 of those were children who had gone missing, 35% were looked after children and ¼ were at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation

(CSE). ACC Hankinson stated that a problem profile had been commissioned to help WYP to understand the issue.

The CC informed the PCC that the figures presented meant that on average a person was missing for 21 hours which equates to 18,700 days of police time per year spent looking for missing people. ACC Hankinson added that this demand was in the here and now and could not be delayed.

The PCC asked WYP to explain why the number of residential homes in the report had been amended from 107 to 88 residential homes and whether the larger figure included the number of unregulated 16+ provision in West Yorkshire. ACC Hankinson said that the larger figure of 107 would include the unregulated 16+ provision or 'places where young people are resident' and that the figures do fluctuate. ACC Hankinson said that WYP try and capture the unregulated 16+ provision figures in the Missing Partnership Meeting but all figures will be collected more accurately moving forward.

The PCC then asked whether any best practice could be adopted from the approach applied for children and young people to improve the adult missing processes. ACC Hankinson said they were looking for best practice examples nationally and that adults who don't have complex issues and are one off occasions are hard to predict. She discussed an example of best practice around mental health and working with hospitals and A&E to develop key relationships with partners who understand the issues.

The PCC asked in relation to the crime prevention work mentioned in the report, whether the directors of children's services were on board with the project. ACC Hankinson said that the crime prevention officer leading the work was linked in with various boards.

The CEO then asked whether WYP had any clear routes to refer their concerns back into Ofsted around care establishments. ACC Hankinson said yes they did and they had a good example of when an establishment was closed down due to a number of issues and the vulnerability of the young people in their care.

The PCC discussed the delay with the national strategy and the concern that the data could now be out of date.

Action – The PCC to write to the national minister lead to be update on a timeline for the national strategy

The PCC asked in relation to the Child Rescue Alert mentioned in the report, whether WYP could share any outcomes. ACC Hankinson said as it's a national mechanism and that the criteria to use it is so high that it hasn't been reached yet so has not been utilised for any cases so far. The PCC asked for further information to be included in the next report.

Action – for more information to be included in the next report about the Child Rescue Alert, in particular if culture is having an impact on whether or not cases meet the threshold to utilise it