



**West
Yorkshire
Policing
& Crime**

**Tracy
Brabin
Mayor of
West Yorkshire**



**Alison Lowe
Deputy Mayor for
Policing & Crime**

Item 6

Report to: Police and Crime Panel

Date: 12 April 2024

Subject: **Missing Persons**

Report of: Alison Lowe, Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime

Author: Policing and Crime Team, West Yorkshire Combined Authority

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide information and context for work concerning Missing Persons by West Yorkshire Police (WYP) and the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC). Much of the NPCC's work is linked to that of WYP through the NPCC national lead on this topic, Deputy Chief Constable (DCC) Catherine Hankinson.
- 1.2 To enable the Police and Crime Panel to understand more about this area of work and to provide feedback on key initiatives in West Yorkshire.

2. OVERVIEW

- 2.1 The NPCC undertake a wide range of work in the sphere of Missing Persons, and provide good guidance and leadership in this area.
- 2.2 WYP have allocated specific resources to this area, with a WYP Lead for Missing People working closely with colleagues across the district to ensure appropriate responses to reports of missing people and associated issues.
- 2.3 The topic of Missing Persons is captured under 'Safeguarding', which is incorporated within the Police & Crime Plan priority, 'Keeping People Safe and Building Resilience'. We evaluate police and partner performance on this topic under the priority of 'Responding to Multiple and Complex Needs', which includes two performance indicators relating to Missing Persons:
 - Keep number of repeat missing children below baseline level
 - Keep number of repeat missing adults below baseline level
- 2.4 Both of these indicators are Police and Crime Plan Measures, and so have been monitored via quarterly Performance Reports, which have been presented to the Police and Crime Panel, and in discussion with the Chief Constable through Quarterly Governance Meetings.

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- 2.5 The report below is intended to provide information and context for work concerning Missing Persons by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), and here in West Yorkshire. Much of the NPCC's work is linked to that of WYP through the NPCC national lead on this topic, DCC Catherine Hankinson.
- 2.6 The report that follows will enable the Police and Crime Panel to understand more about this area of work and to provide feedback on key initiatives in West Yorkshire.
- 2.7 Note that the later sections of the report focus on Key National Initiatives of the NPCC Missing Person Portfolio. This is useful context for understanding the wider world of Missing Persons. The first section of the report (sections 1 and 2) provide information on Key Initiatives of the WYP Missing Person Portfolio and is specific to West Yorkshire.
- 2.8 Note also that some elements of the work referred to below interlink with other areas of the Police and Crime Plan, and so are picked up elsewhere by the Policing and Crime Team. For example, Right Care Right Person (RCRP) is a current focus of the Criminal Justice and Mental Health Forum.

3. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

- 3.1 Various equality, diversity and inclusion factors are linked to the topic of Missing Persons, and are referred to throughout the report that follows, including disability, race and gender.

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN WEST YORKSHIRE

- 4.1 The delivery of the projects and interventions listed in this paper cover all ages, although some are limited to a specific age group.
- 4.2 Additionally, key metrics for Missing Persons are split between children and adults, so performance can be tracked separately.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications to be considered in this paper.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no legal implications to be considered in this paper.

7. SUPPORTING PAPERS

- **Missing People Portfolio Report**

8. CONTACT INFORMATION

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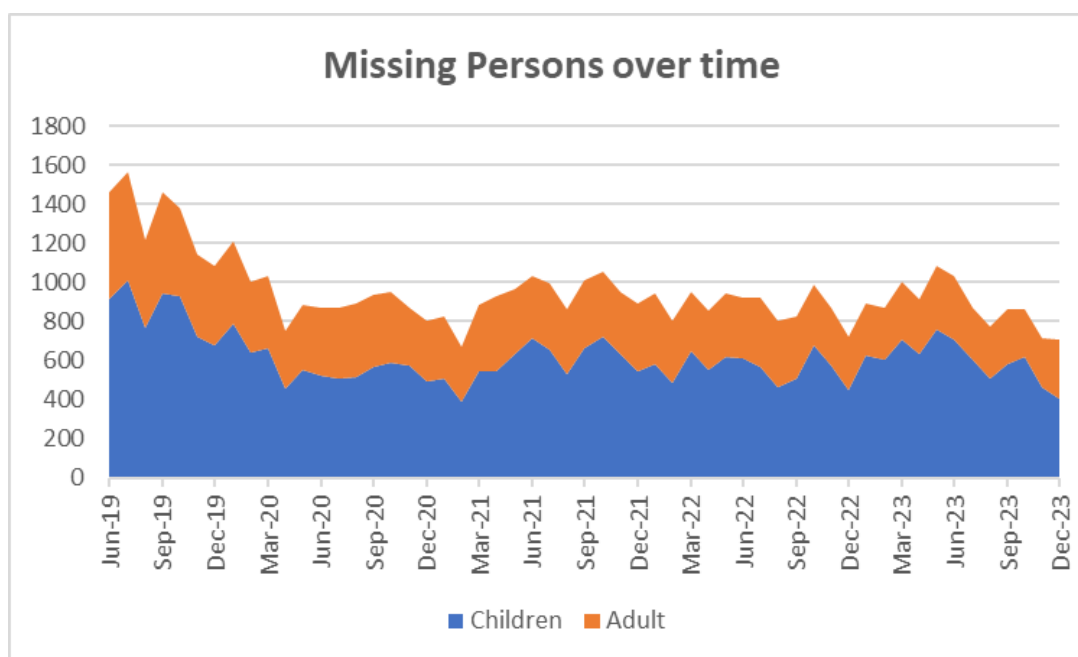
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MISSING PEOPLE PORTFOLIO REPORT

West Yorkshire Police Missing People Portfolio

1. Current Missing Picture in West Yorkshire

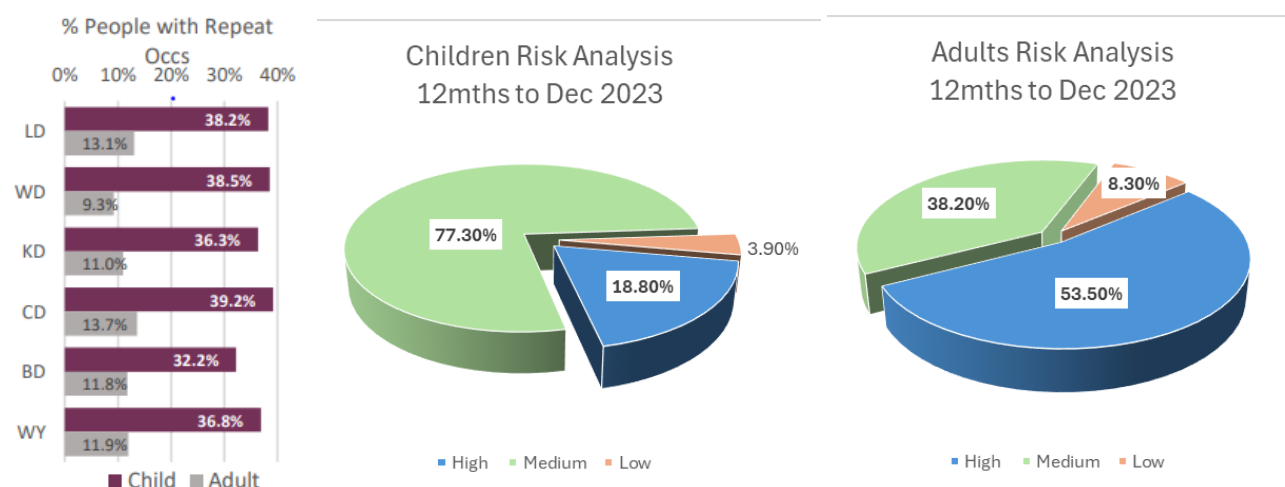
- 1.1. WYP deals with over 10,000 missing person calls every year, 30% of which are considered to be ‘high-risk’.
- 1.2. The work to locate missing people and prevent missing episodes is closely linked to the police and our partners’ work to safeguard vulnerable people.
- 1.3. The reasons why people go missing are complex and can be linked to their mental health, emotional or physical abuse, or exploitation. Adults experiencing missing episodes can be suffering dementia, leaving them extremely vulnerable. Children who go missing are especially vulnerable to criminal and sexual exploitation.
- 1.4. When a person goes missing, the police are under great pressure to find them quickly. Therefore, work linked to missing persons represents significant challenges in terms of the intense resource implications of an operation to find a vulnerable missing person, and in the initial investment in preventative work to help break the cycle of repeat missing episodes that some individuals experience.
- 1.5. WYP have been at the vanguard of developing innovative new practices in this topic area over several years (such as the Right Care Right Person programme discussed later). This has concluded with DCC Hankinson taking the lead role on Missing Persons through the National Police Chiefs’ Council. Much of the NPCC activity set out later in this paper has roots in West Yorkshire.
- 1.6. Over the last 12 months there have been 10,575 missing persons (including repeats). The trends for this are shown below:



- 1.7. The numbers of missing persons dropped during the pandemic, and has stabilised over recent months.

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- 1.8. Although the highest number of repeat missing in West Yorkshire is for children under the age of 18, repeat missing adults have a higher risk level:



2. Key Initiatives of the WYP Missing Person Portfolio

2.1. Safe and Found Online – the digital Herbert Protocol

- 2.1.1. Due to the number of adults at high risk, there are a number of current projects in West Yorkshire. The first is the digital Herbert protocol. The Herbert protocol (where the details of a person that frequently goes missing are recorded including information such as where they have lived before and where they like to frequent) was a paper document, but this was limited in scope. A digital document was therefore made to record these details. There are over 200 people now registered with Safe and Found Online (SAFO) who have a digital Herbert Protocol. The system is yet to be tested as there have been no missing reports so far in West Yorkshire that involve a person living with dementia who has a SAFO account. WYP intend to raise its profile over the next few months with increased publicity and communications, working with colleagues in WYCA.

2.2. Left Home Case/Deliberate Absences

- 2.2.1. The WYP Missing People Lead continues to work with District Inspectors to ensure there is an appropriate police response to reports of adults who have decided to leave home and/or are not remaining in contact with concerned family members. Any police enquiries should be proportionate to the level of risk associated with the absence, whilst respecting the Human Rights of the person involved. WYP will be participating in the national debate as to how rigorous initial enquiries should be before a decision is made to file an incident as a left-home case, and our policy will be continually reviewed in response to that national debate.
- 2.2.2. A recent audit demonstrated a mixed picture of decision making by Inspectors across the Force and the WYP Lead for Missing People continues to work with Inspectors to help them understand and apply Force policy.
- 2.2.3. A series of interactive workshops is planned for the summer.

2.3. Police Race Action Plan

- 2.3.1 The WYP Missing People Lead is working with colleagues from the Black Police Association. A number of missing occurrences involving people who are black or of black heritage are being scrutinised to establish whether there are any areas for

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improvement in the service that was provided to the black person and/or their family. The scrutiny also seeks to understand whether there is any evidence of unconscious bias from the officers dealing with the missing person investigation. Work is also being undertaken to improve data quality so that further analysis can be completed, and WYP continue to be involved in national discussions and workshops.

2.4. Training

- 2.4.1 The WYP Lead for Missing People completes a significant amount of training to both newly promoted and existing Inspectors throughout the year. The training focusses on application of Force policy, risk assessments, decision making and robust rationale that justifies and explains those decisions.
- 2.4.2 The WYP Lead for Missing People also works closely with colleagues within the Initial Contact Centre. This is to ensure their training is up to date and in line with Force policy as well as keeping training material and guidance current.

2.5. Right Care Right Person (RCRP)

- 2.5.1 The WYP Missing People Lead is a member of the RCRP Working Group. This group leads on and reviews the response within WYP to calls for service that may be appropriately dealt with under the RCRP procedures and the presence of the missing lead at the meeting ensures that there is a focus on missing as part of this response. Whilst aiming to ensure that the right person responds to the call for service, the Safeguarding oversight ensures that the police response to missing children and vulnerable adults is based on accurate assessments of risk and complies with Force policies. The Missing Person policy is regularly reviewed and updated by the WYP Missing People Lead.
- 2.5.2 WYP are also considering any policy changes that may be required in light of the Nicola Bulley report. (the Lancashire missing person where media handling was questioned).

2.6. Information sharing and best practice

- 2.6.1 The WYP Missing People Lead is the North-East Regional representative for the Missing portfolio and attends both North-East Regional and the National Missing Person meetings.
- 2.6.2 They also chair a Force Level meeting four times a year which includes the District Missing from Home Co-Ordinators, plus District sergeants and inspectors. Best practice is shared, performance is reviewed including scrutiny of data and staff are updated on the national and regional work being completed.
- 2.6.3 They will also be representing WYP at the National Missing People Conference due to be held this June.
- 2.6.4 The WYP Missing People Lead is in regular contact with DCC Hankinson's Staff Officer ensuring that WYP are at the forefront of National Initiatives, participating at their fullest and completely up to date with National guidance and advice.

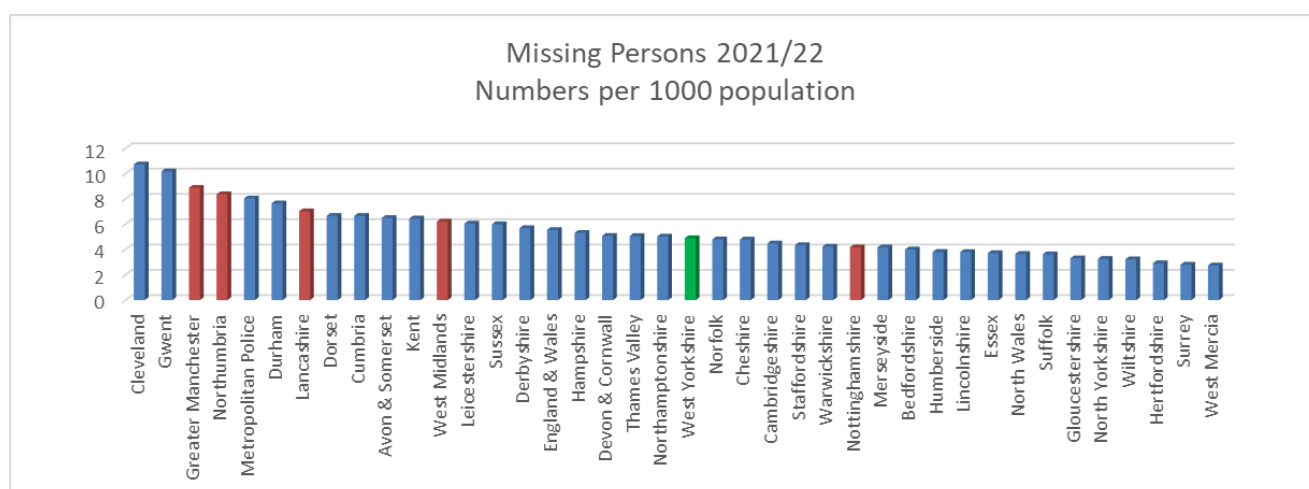
Missing People Portfolio – National Picture

3. Current Missing Picture across England and Wales

- 3.1. The National Crime Agency currently compile the Missing Persons stats for England and Wales, and the current data is up to March 2022

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- 3.2. The below looks at the number of missing persons across all forces that were able to provide numbers:



- 3.3 West Yorkshire (in green) is mid table and lower than many of its most similar group (shown in red - although some areas, such as South Yorkshire and South Wales were unavailable).

4. Key National Initiatives of the NPCC Missing Person Portfolio

4.1. The National Framework for Adults Missing from Health and Care Settings

- 4.1.1. This framework was developed by a national Task and Finish Group that was convened with representatives from a range of sectors including the NPCC Missing People Portfolio to agree a better multi-agency response for missing adults from health and care settings.
- 4.1.2. An increasing number of forces are adopting this Framework that is published on the Home Office website. It sets out a basis for multi-agency partnerships to consider the best model to respond to adults who go missing from health and care settings, and it considers the roles and responsibilities of different professionals.
- 4.1.3. It aligns with the RCRP approach (which originally started in West Yorkshire and was added to by Humberside to provide the framework that is seen today) and promotes that medical or mental health professionals should seek to locate patients who go missing from health care settings by checking with relatives and at the home address of the patient unless there is critical concern that justifies an immediate police response. It is not in the best interests of patients that the police attend the home address of a patient who has gone missing from a health care setting to try and persuade them to return for treatment.
- 4.1.4. The threshold of 'critical concern' that justifies police deployment will be met where there is a real, immediate risk to life, serious harm, or significant harm, or suspicious circumstances that indicate the patient may have been a victim of a serious crime.
- 4.1.5. Examples of critical concern include a patient who has left hospital with the intention to complete suicide, a patient with dementia who is wandering the streets confused and may be unable to find their way home, a patient with a serious head injury who may collapse in the street, or a victim of domestic abuse who has been coerced to leave prior to treatment by an abusive partner.
- 4.1.6. Useful website links:

[Policy paper overview: The multi-agency response for adults missing from health and care settings: A national framework for England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/multi-agency-response-for-adults-missing-from-health-and-care-settings)

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[NPCC Advice on the APPG Missing Adults Framework](#)

4.2. **Children who go Missing from Care Framework including the Levels of Intervention Model**

- 4.2.1. The Children Missing from Care Framework has been developed by a National Multi-agency Task and Finish Group and is based on the levels of intervention model developed by WYP which was incorporated into the West Yorkshire Force Missing Person Policy in January 2022.
- 4.2.2. It seeks to find the balance between the under-reporting or under-recording of young people as missing that can lead to lost opportunities to safeguard those children, and the premature or unnecessary reporting of children as missing when they are just late home or are testing the boundaries, which can lead to avoidable police contact and sometimes the unnecessary criminalisation of children.
- 4.2.3. WYP are currently piloting the Children who go Missing from Care Framework. The Home Office have funded an evaluation of the impact of the framework which is being completed by the University of South Wales and the National Missing People Charity.
- 4.2.4. A national training package has been developed and is available free of charge to all local partnerships. Some key accommodation providers have independently adopted the framework.
- 4.2.5. Useful website link: [Missing Children from Care Framework](#)

Note: The following are a number of projects where the NPCC Lead (DCC Hankinson) and the staff officer that leads the NPCC missing people portfolio (both from WYP) are working on on a national scale. This work is enhanced by their work in West Yorkshire and will enable work conducted locally to influence and inform national change.

4.3. **Missing Vulnerable Adults from Supported Living Framework**

- 4.3.1. The NPCC Lead (DCC Hankinson from WYP) has been working with the Home Group to develop a framework for missing vulnerable adults from supported living accommodation. A Task and Finish Group was set up with several Housing Organisations providing supported housing services. This framework adopts the Levels of Intervention Model previously adopted by WYP and clarifies the roles and responsibilities of Housing Organisations when vulnerable adults go missing from supported living accommodation. It also provides advice on when to report vulnerable adults as missing to the police. It is anticipated that this framework will be published during 2024.

4.4. **National Law Enforcement Database (LEDS) National Register for Missing Persons**

- 4.4.1. Due to changes to the Police National computer, a new Project Team is working with the NPCC Missing People Portfolio and several forces to develop a new resource ready to go live by the end of 2024. This will for the first time create a national database for all missing persons that will give all police forces access to key intelligence relating to all missing people so that should they locate a missing person in another force area, they will be able to access photographs, risk factors, details of previous incidents and safeguarding concerns.

4.5. **NPCC Advice on Missing Adult Migrants**

- 4.5.1. The 'NPCC Advice to Police Forces on Adult Asylum Seekers, Undocumented Migrants and Visa Applicants who Abscond and when they should be Recorded as Missing' and an accompanying operational flow chart have been developed by a Task

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and Finish Group chaired by the NPCC Missing Person Portfolio. This provides guidance to police forces on when to categorise migrants as missing people and investigate because of concerns about modern slavery and human trafficking, and when to categorise migrants as deliberately avoiding immigration procedures and consider them to be the responsibility of Immigration Enforcement to locate.

4.5.2. Useful website link: [Missing Migrant Adult Advice](#)

4.6. **NPCC Guidance on Missing Child Migrants**

4.6.1. The NPCC Guidance on Missing Child Migrants was developed following extensive consultation with the Home Office, Immigration, Modern Slavery and Organised Immigration Crime Programme (MSOIC), the NPCC Modern Slavery Portfolio, NCA, UK Missing Persons Unit, police forces, statutory agencies, and third sector organisations.

4.6.2. This document seeks to provide advice to policing on how to respond to reports of migrant children and seeks to ensure a professional and consistent response across the UK. The primary focus of this document relates to unaccompanied migrant children, although there are sections on missing migrant families that include children, missing migrant children who have applied for a visa, and missing migrant children who have applied to remain in the UK under the EU Settlement Scheme.

4.6.3. Useful website link: [Missing Migrant Child Advice](#)

4.7. **Missing Migrant Children from Home Office Hotels**

4.7.1. A National Multi-agency Task and Finish Group was set up to develop an effective partnership response to migrant children who went missing from hotels managed on behalf of the Home Office. The NPCC Lead for Missing People worked alongside the National Crime Agency to complete an intelligence assessment, and an Operational Group was set up to bring together the different forces who were affected and partner agencies to share best practice. An operational guide for investigators on the recommended enquiries to conduct was also developed.

4.8. **Transfer of Investigations Task and Finish Group**

4.8.1. The NPCC Lead for Missing People set up a Task and Finish Group to review and update the advice on the transfer of investigations following criticism from coroner's officers when poor transfers led to delays in police enquiries being conducted in another force which subsequently resulted in a fatal outcome. The NPCC advice seeks to ensure the smooth transfer of investigations between forces when the majority of enquiries to locate a missing person are in another force area. The updated advice also includes a section on how to request missing person enquiries in another force to ensure enquiries are appropriately prioritised and risk is recognised.

4.8.2. Useful website links:

[NPCC Advice Requesting Missing Person Enquiries in Another Force and Transfers of Investigations](#)

[NPCC Flow Charts Requesting Missing Person Enquiries in Another Force and Transfers of Investigation](#)

[Missing persons tasking and transfer request form](#)

4.9. **NPCC Advice on Prevention Interviews and Return Home Interviews**

4.9.1. This NPCC advice was produced by the NPCC Missing People Portfolio in response to an action from the National Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Action Plan to ensure

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intelligence from prevention interviews and return home interviews is effectively communicated to the police, and police intelligence systems are updated to ensure opportunities to identify and prosecute exploiters of children are identified and actioned.

4.9.2. Useful website link: [NPCC Advice - Prevention Interviews and Return Home Interviews](#)

4.10. **Disproportionality and Discrimination Issues**

4.10.1. The Police Race Action Plan (PRAP) includes several actions that seek to ensure that police personnel have the knowledge, understanding and awareness to deliver the most appropriate care to missing people from the Black community following concerns expressed by some Black families that police officers do not always take their concerns seriously and officers do not always recognise risk when Black people go missing.

4.10.2. Last year, the NPCC Missing Person Portfolio, the PRAP Workstream Co-ordinator, the Missing People Charity and the Missing Black People Charity held a sharing event in September where families of Black missing people shared their experiences of reporting Black people missing to the police. The NPCC Missing People Portfolio intends to build upon this work this year by running four workshops to discuss what we can learn from these experiences. The first of those workshops has already been held in February 2024 when it was discussed how to differentiate between poor service in general from poor service due to unconscious bias. In future workshops, potential bias on how risk is assessed will be discussed along with adultification, how to manage public expectations, and how to improve the policing response to Black missing people.

4.10.3. The NPCC Lead has also secured funding from the Home Office for research on disproportionality and discrimination that is being conducted by Goldsmiths and Portsmouth Universities to explore these issues further. Their report will be published before the summer of 2024.

4.11. **Safe and Found Online – Herbert Protocol and Forcer Protocol**

4.11.1. WYP are piloting the Safe and Found Online digital version of the Herbert Protocol and Greater Manchester Police are piloting the Safe and Found Online digital version of the Forcer Protocol. The Herbert Protocol is aimed at people with dementia who may go missing, and the Forcer Protocol is aimed at veterans with PTSD who may go missing. The advantages of the Safe and Found Online digital versions of these forms include: the police not having to store copies of the forms on police systems prior to the person going missing; families have easy access to the form to keep it updated which eliminates data protection concerns; and if the person does go missing, police officers can access the most up to date version of the form on their desktops or mobile devices after being provided with a password to access the relevant form.

4.12. **Task and Finish Group – Developing a National Philomena Protocol Form**

4.12.1. The NPCC Missing People Portfolio has set up a Task and Finish Group to develop a National Philomena Protocol Form. This will promote a more consistent approach across the UK. Over 37 forces have now adopted the Philomena Protocol or a local equivalent. The Philomena Protocol seeks to encourage carers and social workers to compile quality information on children who are at risk of going missing. It includes advice on what actions carers are expected to take both before they report

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the child as missing to the police and after they have reported the incident to the police. The first meeting of the Task and Finish Group was held on 22 February 2024.

5. National Missing People Groups

- 5.1. Missing People Expert Reference Group: This is chaired by DCC Hankinson and brings together representatives from the statutory, voluntary, community and academic sectors to consider national issues and concerns. The group seeks to agree a way forward to improve the partnership response and the service provided to those who go missing and those who are left behind. This meeting is held twice a year.
- 5.2. National Missing People Policing Group: This is chaired by WYP's Alan Rhees-Cooper, the Staff Officer to DCC Hankinson. This group brings together Regional Police, Home Office, DfE, HMICFRS, IOPC representatives to provide updates on national and local initiatives to develop an effective policing response to missing person reports and investigations. This meeting is held four times a year.

6. Information sharing and best practice

- 6.1. **Discussion Groups:** The NPCC Missing Person Portfolio regularly holds national discussion groups on key issues relating to missing people. Some discussion groups have attracted over 200 police, local authority, health and third sector participants over several sessions. Topics in 2023 included Filing Investigations, and Telecom Enquiries in Missing Person Investigations. The following NPCC National Discussion Groups have been planned for this year:
 - Identifying Left Home/ Deliberate Absences
 - Identification of Risk
 - How do the Police Support Families of Repeat Missing People
 - How do we Evaluate Sightings
- 6.2. **Webinars:** The NPCC ran several webinars during 2023 and topics included Using Video Analytics to save Hours of Time viewing CCTV footage in search of a Missing Person, and Operation Watchful – Responding to Missing Migrant Children.
- 6.3. **Conferences:** Conferences in 2023 included the National Missing People Conference, which took place in Bradford and saw over 350 delegates attend. The key theme was Developing Challenges and Key Initiatives in Missing Person Policy, Prevention and Investigation. Also held was the International Bi-annual Conference of Missing Children and Adults, which saw the NPCC Lead for Missing People speak on 'Improving the Partnership Response to Missing People' and the Staff Officer to the NPCC Missing People Lead on 'When do the police have a Legal Duty to Investigate Missing People'. Already in 2024, WYP's Staff Officer to the NPCC Lead for Missing People spoke at the Combatting Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery Conference on the topic of Missing Migrants and Exploitation.