

COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE PEOPLE

2 MAY 2017

**SUBJECT: Missing People**

**Report of the Chief Officer Team**

**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. This report outlines the Force's current position in relation to Missing People and outlines the work being undertaken by West Yorkshire Police to safeguard missing people and achieve the outcomes set out in the Police and Crime Plan.

**RECOMMENDATION**

2. That the Police and Crime Commissioner uses this report to scrutinise Force activity in respect of Missing People.

**POLICE AND CRIME PLAN**

3. Missing People is a Priority in the Police and Crime Plan 2016 – 2021. 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.

**KEY INFORMATION**

4.
  - In the Police and Crime Plan 2013 – 2018, Missing People was incorporated in the safeguarding outcome and was scrutinised at a Community Outcomes Meeting in March 2016.
  - The Plan highlighted that Safeguarding is one of the highest priorities for the police and partners and is an area of work that is subject to a lot of scrutiny and national guidance and policy. Across West Yorkshire there are significant 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 leaving care.
  - On 6<sup>th</sup> December 2016, the Police and Crime Plan 2016 – 2021 was launched, naming Missing People as one of the 16 policing priorities going forward.

- In December 2016, a workshop was held on Missing People to bring together a wide range of partners to discuss the issue and how we can tackle this with a partnership approach. The attendees to this event included statutory and non-statutory partners, community groups and charities working to affect this issue as well as service users.
- In 2017 the OPCC will attend a number partnership meetings to increase information sharing and best practice including with the 5 local councils and with the lead contacts for Children's Homes.
- In partnership with West Yorkshire Police, a new communications campaign is being developed around Missing People. Consultation with young people began in March 2017 and aimed to understand why young people may run away.
- In April 2017, young people will be consulted on effective design and artwork to ensure we catch the attention of young people through this campaign
- A meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> May will be held at the OPCC to approve the report which was written following the Missing People workshop in December. A number of outcomes/actions will be discussed with Safeguarding colleagues.
- The communications campaign will be launched in line with International Missing Children's Day on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2017.
- Benson Lane Children's Home in Wakefield were successful in a Safer Communities Grant for £2330.00 in Grant Round 10 to run a missing people project to understand some high risk young people in their care.

#### **PARTNER CONTRIBUTION**

5.

- WYP have developed a Joint Protocol for the local authorities to adopt which is currently under review by local authority colleagues
- The Missing workshop in December 2016 was a partnership event with colleagues attending from a wide variety of organisations including West Yorkshire Police, Ofsted, local councils, education, and health, voluntary and third sector.
- West Yorkshire Police are coordinating a new Missing People communications campaign working in partnership with a number of the local authorities and the British Transport Police. The campaign will target 12 – 17 year olds and will include communications on social media. This will be released on International Missing Children's Day on 25<sup>th</sup> May.



**Chief Officer Team  
Briefing for PCC**

**Title: Missing People report**

**CoT Sponsor: ACC Foster**

**Report Author: Supt Darren Minton**

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**Summary**

The purpose of this report outlines the work being undertaken by West Yorkshire Police to safeguard missing people and achieve the outcomes set out in the Police and Crime Plan.

Reaching out to people at risk is recognised in the Policing plan as key element of tackling local, regional and national threats, risks and harm. Responding to reports of missing is a core policing priority and recognises the risk of that many missing people are exposed to, particular those with mental health issues, the elderly and children. The link between missing and child sexual exploitation is widely recognised.

The issue of missing is hugely complex, people in very different situations, from a child being abducted by force, to an adult who chooses to leave the family home- may all be labelled as missing. Defining what it means to go missing allows the Police, statutory partners and non-government organisations to better understand the issue and to offer help to those who require it through co-ordinated risk assessments and joint responses.

January 2017 saw the relaunch of the Authorised Professional Practice (**APP**) on missing. The new guidance provided all forces with clarity on definitions and to risk categories. It is hoped through the revised definitions will lead to better data improvements nationally.

### **The main salient points within APP are:-**

- Use of the term 'No apparent risk-absent' rather than 'absent'.
- Use of the term 'Prevention checks' as opposed to 'safe and well' checks.
- Handover - Investigations, particularly in the early stages, must have a documented handover process.
- APP advice on Missing Person Coordinators is 'the Coordinator should not be involved in investigating cases – Focus should be on more strategic problem solving with partner agencies
- Children's services must be notified immediately if the person is under 18.
- Referrals to social care should be completed in line with APP thresholds:-
- the individual is a 'repeat missing person', (reported as missing three times in a rolling 90 day period),
- the individual has experienced, or is likely to experience significant harm,
- for children, the parent or carer appears unable or unwilling to work to support and meet the needs of a child that has gone missing.
- Hospitals are expected to conduct reasonable enquiries
- APP includes a cautionary note regarding the use of 'Concern for welfare':
- Call handlers should receive appropriate training in identifying and understanding risk and risk indicators
- APP promotes the submission of an intelligence report where a child or adult is exploited as missing person information is not currently uploaded to PND.
- Guidance on the timescales for collection of forensic samples
- High-risk missing person – samples to be obtained within 24 hours.
- Medium and low-risk missing person – samples to be obtained within 7 days of the report being made.
- For long term reviews (open for twenty eight days or longer) the DCI must be a trained SIO.
- Reference to reporting restrictions for teachers under the Education Act 2011.

### **REPORT DETAILS**

The NCA Missing Person Bureau data for 2015/2016 was published on the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2017.

#### The Key statistics

- Nationally there were 335,624 calls to the Police Service of England & Wales
- Of which 242,190 translated in missing incidents (42 Forces data)
- 135,382 Missing Individuals – 662 Missing incidents per day
- 370 missing individuals per day

- This equates to a 16% increase nationally
- In April 2013 a fourth risk assessment category was introduced “absent”. West Yorkshire Police adopted a fifth category of “low risk – non deployment” which has since been removed completely.
- From the NCA data set 15/16 -West Yorkshire Police recorded 4,410 Adult missing incidents 72% increase from the previous year (2,564)
- 6,757 Child missing incidents 66% increase from the previous years (4,067)
- Current figures -20,863 missing incidents (above the national average on previous year – 17.4%)
- Recorded occurrences – High risk 2639 – 88% change from 2015/16
- Medium Risk 8707 -37% change from 2015/16
- Low Risk – 1635 - 33% change from 2015/16
- No apparent Risk / Absent – 4077 10% reduction from 2015/16
- The number of individuals is 8163 of which 2088 have more than 1 occurrence.
- The number of children reported missing with repeat occurrences is 1304

The more detailed context is that the change of volume for adults across forces is wide-ranging with some force showing reductions of -30% compared to others showing an increase of 106%. The picture is similar for children ranging from -39% to 140%.

West Yorkshire Police have worked to continually improve the response to missing persons; audits have provided feedback to districts, informed policy development and the development of staff including the Customer Contact Centre and Hub Commanders/Duty Inspectors. As such West Yorkshire Police have improved the identification of vulnerability and assessment of risk directly leading to the improved safeguarding people who go missing.

## **ONGOING WORK AND DEVELOPMENTS**

- Missing person multi agency workshop held on the 6<sup>th</sup> December 2016, attended and hosted by the PCC and Chief Constable with representation from Ofsted – Parveen Hussain & Supt Darren Minton from Safeguarding Governance Unit
- New Force Policy launched – With amendments to Risk categories as suggested by the new APP.
- Reduction in the length of time a person can be deemed absent from 72 hours to 18 hours
- “Low risk – on deployment” category removed
- No child deemed at risk of child sexual exploitation can be deemed low risk or absent
- Improved data collection is collated centrally and disseminated to District safeguarding leads, Safeguarding Board managers and now Ofsted.
- Good information sharing data with Ofsted. Work is also being developed with the CQC – Care Quality Commission around information sharing around missing person incidents from Hospitals and Mental Health care environments

- All frontline Inspectors have undergone immersive ‘hydra’ training in respect of assessing risk.
- New student officers and newly promoted Sgts are also receiving training in respect of missing and vulnerable people
- This training input will also be rolled out across to district control rooms and support staff at public enquiry counters.
- A New Minerva Niche model is in the process of being developed / fine-tuned by South Wales Police. This is expected to roll out across West Yorkshire Police late summer.
- A missing consortium involving all 5 local district leads has been developed, the first meeting is scheduled to take place April / May with a view to developing & sharing good practice around missing incidents through early intervention methods and to revise/review the countywide protocol for missing children from home care
- The meeting will be led by the Central Safeguarding Governance Unit.
- A robust audit regime is in place and will continue to audit and inspect district to ensure consistency of approach and evaluation of risk takes place.
- Missing is a key feature of local accountability meetings ,and will feature again in May 17
- All districts have in place arrangements to discuss incidents of missing children, some more mature than others.
- A revised north eastern regional forces has been reinvigorated and is attended by Supt Minton and chaired by the NCA
- Work is also being developed with OfSted to enhance the information sharing agreement on new and proposed children’s homes
- A similar innovation is being developed with Local authority planning departments to look at changes to plans for new and existing children’s home
- The “Erase” pilot being undertaken in Wakefield has seen reductions in demand through the dedicated work of a local PCSO working closely with a high demand children’s home. This is yet to be evaluated, but early indications are promising.
- The Central Safeguarding Unit have been tasked with writing to all local authority leads – Director of Children Services, to seek their support for attendance at Special operation rooms (SORs) when a high risk child in care goes missing.

## **STRATEGIC RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- The long term trend for missing demand continues to rise.
- The force has seen an increase in the number of children’s homes recorded on Police systems rise from 74 June 2016 to 94 February 2017
- Training of all officers on the new Minerva Niche missing module
- A review of the role profile for missing person co-ordinators, as to whether this needs to be a police officer. - *(APP) recommendation that this role should focus on strategic problem solving rather than involvement of the investigation to locate the said individual*

- The cross government strategy is still being updated, publication date is now likely to summer 17. This will be supported by a new tiered Governance Structure. There will also be a national police meeting, Supt Minton has volunteered West Yorkshire Police to represent the region at this meeting, which also form part an “Expert delivery group”
- A national action plan will accompany the above strategy.

### **EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS**

The issue of gender bias when assessing risk has been addressed through training inputs to Hub Commanders, newly promoted Sgts, and new student officers. Further work is ongoing to raise awareness of gender bias when assessing risk.

### **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

None