

COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE PEOPLE

8 January 2018

SUBJECT: Missing People Update

Report of the Chief Officer Team

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. This update report shows 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.
 - On 6th 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.
 - A meeting on the 8th May was held at the OPCC to approve the report which was written following the Missing People workshop in December. A number of outcomes/actions have been discussed with Safeguarding colleagues and a number of the actions have been incorporated into the Missing Best Practice Meeting which is held quarterly.

- The Safer Communities Fund has awarded 8 projects with grants which focussed on Missing People, totalling £31,950.00. Successful applicants can be viewed on the PCC's [website](#).

PARTNER CONTRIBUTION

5.

- WYP have developed a Joint Protocol for the local authorities to adopt
- The OPCC is represented at the Missing Best Practice meeting chaired by WYP and attended by Care Managers and police officers from each district.
- The PCC worked with the Safeguarding Comms Group of West Yorkshire Police to develop a new Missing People communications campaign working in partnership with a number of the local authorities. The campaign targeted 12 – 17 year olds and will include communications on social media. This was released on International Missing Children's Day on 25th May and received a great response on social media. In total, #runningaway posts on Twitter were seen by an estimated 77,854 Twitter accounts. The most popular post gathered 8,326 impressions after being retweeted 17 times. The posters were also shared on the Force's Instagram and Snapchat accounts in hopes of reaching a younger audience.
- This campaign was successful in a SCF grant to enable it to be extended for a 12 month period and target more vulnerable young people



Chief Officer Team Briefing for PCC

Title: Missing People report

CoT Sponsor: ACC Hankinson

Report Author: Supt Darren Minton

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, particularly those with mental health issues, the elderly and children. The link between missing and child sexual exploitation is widely recognised.

“Missing” is a policing priority and remains a high demand and hugely complex area of business. The “Missing” Authorised Professional Practice (APP) which was launched in January 2017 is being embedded across the force with a greater degree of consistency being applied to risk assessments.

There has been a notable reduction in those individuals risk assessed as - No Apparent Risk (formerly referred to as absent)

REPORT DETAILS

The reporting of missing vulnerable people continues to rise across the county. Monthly levels have now stabilised but remain high with 9,573 missing occurrences reported between April 2017 and August 2017. This represents a further 14% increase in the same period last year.

18% of those reported are graded as high risk and almost two thirds are children, over one quarter of which are at risk from child sexual exploitation. Each high risk missing person places a significant demand of Police resources, both within the background and in terms of deployment. Following national guidance, each time a high risk person is reported missing the relevant police District opens a Special Operations Room (SOR). The SOR is staffed with a dedicated controller, drawn from the District Communications Room; a researcher from the Intelligence unit and available CID resources which is all managed by the duty Detective Inspector. This team of people will be responsible for setting the direction of the investigation and the tasks that need to be completed. It is usually the case that front line patrol are then deployed to carry out the tasks and actions allocated by the SOR, due to the high risk nature of these incidents, this can draw significant levels of patrol officers away from other policing duties and call handling.

The number of children missing from care has increased by 30%.

The force has seen a 22% increase of recorded children's homes on Police systems since 2016, with Bradford and Kirklees seeing the largest increases, particularly those classified as Private care homes. It is believe that this is due to more affordable housing within those districts and as such the force area is a net importer of vulnerable young people with complex needs.

The breakdown of children homes are as follows:

Bradford – 27 (16 Private, 11 Local authority)

Calderdale – 18 (14 Private, 4 Local authority)

Kirklees – 22 (17 Private, 5 Local authority)

Leeds – 20 (10 Private, 10 Local authority)

Wakefield – 12 (7 Private, 5 Local authority)

Force area 99 Homes – 62% Private 38% Local authority

ONGOING WORK AND DEVELOPMENTS

- Force Policy is in line with the new APP.
- Supt Darren Minton is representing the force and the North-East regional forces on the National Missing Working group – The first meeting will take place on the 15th of

November 2017 and will be launched by Chief Constable Mike Veale – NPCC lead for missing. This group will look improve and standardise missing person investigations and look at the challenges faced both with investigations and safeguarding activity. The aim will be to identify and share best practice, thereby creating cohesion, coherence, clarity and consistency within the missing arena and ultimately improving the policing response to missing. Information will be shared with the West Yorkshire Missing consortium

- Continued improved data collection is collated centrally and disseminated to District safeguarding leads, Safeguarding Board managers, Ofsted and Quality care Commission.
- Ofsted now submit a monthly report detailing a full list of known children's homes for cross referencing police data sets. All children's homes, regardless of the number of bedrooms, have to be registered with and regulated by Ofsted.
- All architectural liaison officers have been briefed on new and emerging homes seeking planning permission via the local authority in order to look at risk based builds and that the appropriate design is recommended to ensure children are placed in a safe environment.
- Training to newly promoted Sergeants and Inspectors receive an input on Missing including the additions from the Authorised Professional Practice (APP).
- All frontline new student officers are also receiving training in respect of missing and vulnerable people.
- 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 in December 2017.
- A missing consortium involving all 5 local Authority and District leads has been developed to share good practice around missing incidents through early intervention methods and to revise/review the countywide protocol for missing children from home care. The meeting is be led by the Safeguarding Central Governance Unit. One of the areas of work was to explore the Local Authority working in the Special Operations Room (SOR) when a high risk missing child is reported. Wakefield have tested this practice which worked well in relation to information sharing, locating the child and preparing for the safe return. Other Local Authorities intend to scope out with potential to roll out Force wide.
- A robust audit regime is in place and will continue to audit and inspect Districts to ensure consistency of approach and evaluation of risk takes place.
- Missing is a key feature of local accountability meetings and featured recently in September 2017 to examine the appropriate use of the no apparent risk category and test the standard of problem solving in relation the Missing people who experience mental health issues.
- New monthly performance data is being produced on those falling into the category of "No apparent risk" to check the continued appropriate use of the category in accordance the Force policy.

- A new daily safeguarding report is produced, covering demand areas of vulnerability, but specifically the volume and grading of missing vulnerable people. This data is shared with all safeguarding leads and Chief Officer team
- All districts have in place arrangements to discuss incidents of missing children, some more mature than others.
- A pilot has started with amendments to the “Misper 7” form, which is the prevention interview with a returned child or adult conducted by the police. The revised format intends to glean more useful information from the person to prevent future Missing incidents and provide suitable intervention. The pilot will be evaluated after three months and is supported through work with Cambridge University
- Interviews with children from Children’s homes who have repeatedly been missing will form part of a crime prevention study, with informal interviews planned to collate the reasons for their missing episodes in order for the police and partners to change processes to prevent future incidents, for example, changing the environment of their home. This piece of working is being undertaken by the force Vulnerability Crime reduction officer and supported by Huddersfield University
- A new Missing campaign called “Running away is not the answer” was launched in May 2017 and is on-going. The campaign is targeted at children in particular to prevent episodes of Missing and encourage them to seek help.
- Several projects that involve preventing Missing incidents were successful in the Safer Communities Funds.
- A new national register for missing persons is under development, the implementation of this register will be in quarter 4, 2018
- Memorandum of understanding / service level agreement is also in development. This will detail corporate parental responsibility for schools, hospitals, care homes and children`s homes. This will form part of the national guidance document.
- There is District level strategic problem solving taking place, focused on both individuals who are at risk of going missing and locations. Districts are therefore working in partnership with Local Authority partners to ensure that corporate parenting and safeguarding responsibilities are being carried out appropriately and where necessary action is taken and reviewed.

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, 94 - February 2017, 99 - November 2017
- Training of all officers on the new Minerva Niche missing module and roll out on the handheld devices
- The cross government strategy is still being updated, publication date is now likely to December 2017. This will be supported by a new tiered Governance Structure.
- 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