

COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE PEOPLE

19 June 2018

**SUBJECT: Missing People  
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 over 10,000 missing person calls every year, many of whom 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 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.
  - A meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 2016 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 10 projects with grants which focussed on Missing People, totalling £41,035.00. 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 25<sup>th</sup> 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 COM

### Title: Missing People report

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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, 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 now 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) from 26.0% last year to 15.0% this year.

#### REPORT DETAILS

The reporting of missing vulnerable people continues to rise across the county. Monthly levels have now stabilised but remain high with 21372 missing occurrences reported between April 2017 and March 2018. This represents a 5.5% increase in the same period last year.

19% 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.

For the missing children – 35.7% of these are In Care

There are currently 88 residential Children’s Homes in West Yorkshire which range from one bedded units to 16 bedded short break services. There is a higher figure (107) which has been previously quoted – but this includes some facilities that would not fit the definition of a ‘Residential Children’s Home’.

In terms of West Yorkshire the position from Ofsted is as follows:

	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	New Home Planned
Bradford	3	11	3	2
Calderdale	7	9	0	1
Kirklees	5	12	4	0
Leeds	4	11	3	0
Wakefield	6	5	1	1

The most common concern that is picked up at an inspection is around poor placement decisions i.e. the decision to accept new placements is not based on the known needs of the children or young people and whether the staff already working in that home can manage those needs. Sometimes homes do not have managers in place and staff are frequently ill-equipped to deal with episodes of missing from these homes. West Yorkshire Police is keen to be part of these placement decisions.

## ONGOING WORK AND DEVELOPMENTS

- Force Policy is in line with the new APP – but there is an ongoing action to update force policy in line with our implementation of the Niche Missing Module. The main change will be with regards to the role of the duty Sgt to provide enhanced supervision and tasking of the missing investigation. This will involve a formal handover process from named supervisor to named supervisor. This Sgt will have responsibility for either ratifying the current risk level or if they are proposing to change the risk level, the case will be referred to the duty inspector. That Sgt is also responsible for checking that tasks are completed and setting new tasks, allocated to a named officer.
- Continued improved data collection is collated centrally and disseminated to District safeguarding leads, Safeguarding Board managers, Ofsted and Quality care Commission. A recent change to improve data collection has been to identify all the business names of the private care homes. A force problem profile for Missing has been commissioned, and it is hoped that this data will support the value of the end

product. It will also assist districts to identify the owners of those locations that are problematic and require further intervention.

- 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.
- All frontline new student officers are receiving training in respect of missing and vulnerable people.
- Under development is a formal missing person's problem solving process similar to the Misper 18 that is used for children who are at high risk of CSE. This process will involve clearer guidance around the identification and prioritisation of cases that require further intervention. The process would then be formalised on Police systems as an occurrence with a trigger plan attached. This would include a brief history of the person, their known risks and places they are likely to frequent or people they may visit.
- A new missing audit is due to commence during May/June in the Safeguarding Central Governance Unit
- 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. Identifying the regular missing persons in this category.
- All districts have in place arrangements to discuss incidents of missing children, some more mature than others. Whilst multi agency partnerships and regular meetings are now well embedded for children, adult missing processes and partnership are not yet as sophisticated.
- 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.
- The pilot for the New Misper 7 form revealed an increase in the engagement with returning persons, this has now prompted the new form to be used in Leeds District and this will run until the Niche Missing Module is embedded in the District as the new form will then populate the module with the enhanced data.
- Interviews with children from Children's homes who have repeatedly been missing will form part of a crime prevention study, with 50 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. There has been a slight delay with the commencement of this work. The force has

made Local safeguarding board managers and Director of Children`s service aware of this piece of work. It is hoped this will start at the beginning of June 2018.

- This piece of work will link directly to the force`s Protecting Vulnerable People Plan & the Police & Crime Plan , but also the early intervention strategy focusing on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)
- As a force we are currently working closely with the NCA Missing Persons Unit and the national Missing Persons charity in order to pilot a targeted and localised version of Child Rescue Alert. Whilst the national child rescue alert has been in place for some time, it is used very rarely as the criteria often does not apply for a nationwide alert. The pilot is therefore seeking to find out if a local alert attracts greater usage and assists in finding children more quickly. The other difference is that we are piloting the use of 101 to call handle the response from the public to see if this is manageable. There have been no alerts to date, the pilot runs for 12 weeks from the 16<sup>th</sup> April until 8<sup>th</sup> July 2018.
- A new national register for missing persons is still under development, the implementation of this register will be now be in Spring 2019
- The West Yorkshire Protocol for missing children has been updated, and is currently in draft form. Key changes include formal recognition that many children who go missing are not only at risk of Sexual Exploitation, but also of Criminal Exploitation. It also recognises other vulnerable groups such as children who are exploited across county lines by drugs offenders and unaccompanied asylum seeker children.

## **STRATEGIC RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- The long term trend for missing demand continues to rise.
- The force has seen a continuing increase in the number of children`s homes recorded in West Yorkshire
- Training of all officers on the new Minerva Niche missing module and roll out on the handheld devices
- The cross government strategy publication has been delayed again, potentially for another 3 months, potentially requiring a rewrite. This is down to the changes within the government at ministerial level and other government issues.
- 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.