



SCRUTINY PANEL

CHILDREN WHO GO MISSING



DUTIES

- Local authorities are responsible for protecting children whether they go missing from their family home or from local authority care; they should plan to prevent children from going missing and to protect them when they do.
- The local authority and police should work together to risk assess cases of children missing from home or care and to analyse data for patterns that indicate particular concerns and risks.
- Individual local authorities and police forces should have an agreed Runaway and Missing From Home and Care (RMFHC) protocol that the TSCP has oversight of.
- The TSCP should receive and scrutinise regular reports from the local authority analysing data on children missing from home and from care.
- When a child is found, they must be offered an independent return interview within 72 hours of being returned to their home or care setting.

LOCAL PROCESSES & RESPONSE

- In April 2022, the return interview service was brought in-house, having previously been commissioned to Barnardo's
- The in-house service consists of 0.2 x Team Manager; 1 x Missing Coordinator and 1.5 x Missing Project Workers
- The team is co-located alongside the Childrens Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in Tameside One
- Daily reports are received into the MASH from Greater Manchester Police (GMP) identifying children who have been reported missing
- This prompts safeguarding checks, a missing episode to be created and relevant professionals and services to be notified

LOCAL PROCESSES & RESPONSE

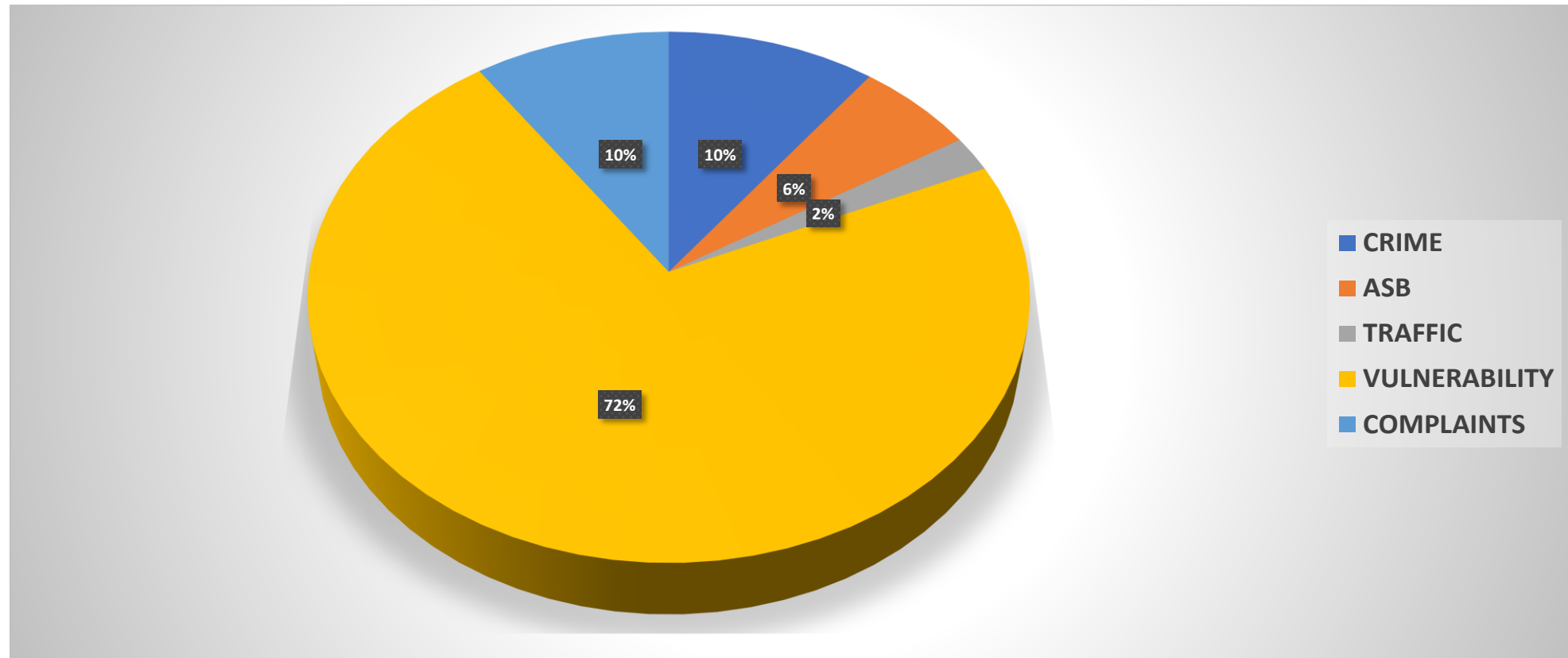
- Within the protocol there are key trigger points for children who go missing that prompt a Risk Management Meeting (RMM) to take place
- Tier 1 RMM if the child has had 4 MFH episodes in a 1 month period or been missing for 24 hours
- Tier 2 RMM if the missing incident is lasting more than 7 days or there are persistent concerns following the Tier 1 meeting
- Once located, GMP complete a safe and well check with the child and a representative from the missing service will complete a return interview with them

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT CHILDREN WHO GO MISSING IN TAMESIDE?

- Since the service came in-house in April 2022 the local authority has been developing its understanding of the cohort of children who go missing
- During the first six months of the service being in-house (April – September 2022), there were 1,177 reported incidents of children going missing
- These reports related to 303 children, with a more or less equal split between male and female
- 130 of these children had more than one missing episode
- A small cohort of these children had 10 or more episodes
- Some of these children will be subject to Child Protection/Child in Need Plans or Cared For, but not all of them

Tameside Police Missing Person Demand

In the last 3 months, **72%** of Tameside Police demand is categorised as response to vulnerability. **48%** of vulnerability relates to Missing Persons. 4 locations account for the majority of Missing People reports, three of which are Children's Homes.



Tameside Police Missing Person Definitions and Children

High Risk

Definition: - 'The risk of serious harm to the subject or the public is assessed as very likely.' HIGH risk should be considered the **default risk setting for all children aged 13 or under**, for all children identified as being at risk of child sexual exploitation/child criminal exploitation, and for all Operation Messina missing nominals.

Risk factors are likely to be significant. Immediate action is required of the police, including command level involvement, press or media liaison and close contact with outside agencies. All golden hour tasks and other 'help' options should be considered without delay. The case must be regularly reviewed. A senior investigating officer (SIO) **MUST** be appointed, and the assistance or guidance of MPSOs may be sought.

Medium Risk

Definition: - 'The risk of harm to the subject or the public is assessed as likely but not serious.' Medium risk should be considered the **default risk setting for all children aged 14 – 17 years** inclusive.

The entire missing person 'help' options should be considered and prioritised for action. The case requires positive action by the police to trace the missing person and to assist and support the informant, although not to the total exclusion of all other tasks. The case should be regularly reviewed by supervision, particularly risk assessments due to the passage of time.

Low Risk

Definition: - 'The risk of harm to the subject or the public is assessed as possible but minimal.' **Children aged 13 years or under should NOT be categorised as low risk.** Individuals aged between 14 and 17 may be classed as LOW risk **once** all appropriate risk elements have been considered and documented.

Whilst the officer may be confident that the case will be resolved quickly and without incident, some risk factors do exist, but taken into consideration with other factors, an adverse outcome is not feared. The police will record and circulate (both nationally and locally) details of the missing person and will conduct those enquiries most likely to resolve the case. Friends and family will be asked to assist with enquiries as specified in the agreed Family Contact Plan and the case will be periodically reviewed by supervision.

Details of the case will be notified to the UK Missing Person Unit (UKMPU). The longer the case remains unresolved, the more likely that the risk assessment will need to be re-assessed, particularly in the absence of information which suggests the missing person is safe and well.

Tameside Police Missing Person Policy

Tameside Police treat Missing Persons as a District priority given its significant impact on the availability of police resources in ensuring all safeguarding activity is undertaken. Our local response is in line with the GMP Missing Person's Policy (Feb '22):

1. 4P Plan – prevent, prepare, pursue, protect
2. Dedicated Missing Persons' officer – incorporated into the Neighbourhood Prevention Hub function
3. Fortnightly Missing Person meetings
4. Prevention Hub oversight and problem solving
5. Dedicated PCSO's and NH staff for specific children's homes
6. Centralised missing coordinator
7. PRB – Problem solving plans in place for repeat demand generators
8. Regular vulnerability meetings/strategy meetings for those who are susceptible to CCE/CSE via MASH or Missing Person strategy meetings.

Tameside Police Partnership Missing Person Meetings agenda (Fortnightly)

Tameside Police Senior Leadership team chair a regular partnership tactical meeting on Missing Persons.

Agenda:

1. Apologies
2. Actions/Tasks
3. Partnership update
4. Missing person dip sample review
5. Repeat missing and POP reviews – Subject, location and any criminality or concerns – NH Inspectors/PS's/Prevention hub
6. Response updates – current missing – Relevant Response Inspector to attend
7. Missing person development plan progression
8. Organisational Learning
9. AOB

NEXT STEPS

- A multi-agency working group has been identified to:
 - Review the local MFH policy to ensure roles and responsibilities of all partners are agreed and understood
 - Consider the learning from recent rapid reviews that have involved children who go missing and the partnerships response to this
 - Agree changes to the system to build a missing pathway that will improve internal processes, flow of information and data collection
 - Promote the revised MFH policy across the workforce and wider partnerships
- The return interview service will continue to build on our understanding of the cohort of children who go missing and ensure appropriate and proportionate responses are in place
- Work to improve our response to children who go missing by pulling services for teenagers together, identifying those at risk and ensuring that a targeted response is available at the earliest possible opportunity to prevent escalation
- Work alongside GMP to identify themes and trends in relation to children who go missing and compare our data with stat neighbours
- Systematic reports on children who go missing will be provided to the Complex Safeguarding Strategic Group that is a sub-group of and reports in to the TSCP, providing robust oversight