Candidate Number: POL 1438

Quoc Thanh Vo

Wolfson College

Supervisor: Dr Tim Coupe

6000 Cases of Missing and Absent Persons: Patterns of Crime Harm and Priorities for Resource Allocation

Submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the Master's Degree in Applied Criminology and Police Management

December 2015

Abstract

The objectives of the study are to evaluate the existing approach to assessing the risk of harm to missing and absent people, which may affect how to police these incidents whilst taking into consideration the estimated costs involved. The study is based on 5,984 missing or absent cases during a six-month period in Thames Valley Police (TVP). Missing and absent person records were collected along with crime records and incident attendance records.

The key findings are that the likelihood of death is rare, since only two out of the 3,706 individuals (0.05%) were known to have died during the period of time they were missing. Around 99% of individuals did not suffer any crime harm whilst missing. Even once non-crime harm was included, events such as: domestic non-recordable, mental health incident and child or adult protection incidents, 98% still did not suffer any type of harm. This is despite 820 (16%) cases graded as high-risk and 3,465 (68%) graded as medium-risk. Only 660 (13%) cases were graded as low-risk. Missing people were more likely to cause harm (suspect) than suffer harm (victim). The average word count for the Risk Assessment was low: with high-risk having two less words than medium for Risk Assessment One, and high-risk having one more word than medium risk for Risk Assessment Two. Consequently, officers and supervisors may be relying on their intuition to risk assess rather than the information available on the risk assessment. The minimum annual estimated police officer labour cost to TVP to police missing person enquiries is between £3.1 and £5.5 million. This is compared to £292,500 for absent person enquiries. The results of the study suggest that low-risk

and the new absent category is under-utilised, reflecting a possible overly risk adverse attitude by officers.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to colleagues from Thames Valley for their continued support, particularly former Chief Constable of TVP Sarah Thornton, Detective Chief Superintendent Houalla, Detective Sergeant Yasmin Dean and John Bearn (Sergeant Retired). I am grateful to Peter Milne who navigated the various computer systems with ease to gather the data I needed and also, Dr. Timothy Coupe who guided me through the statistical mine field and whose enthusiasm made the thesis possible. Professor Larry Sherman and Sir Dennis O'Connor for their sound advice, insights and wisdom, which provided huge inspiration. Finally, my partner and family who had to endure my absence and who have encouraged me throughout my studies.

Thank you.

Contents

Lists of Tables

List of Figures

List of Appendices

Introduction

The thesis is an exploratory study into an area of policing that has in recent years never been higher in the national conscious, and where managing the risks involved remains more of an art than science (NPIA National Police Improvement Agency, 2010). Every two minutes a person is recorded as missing by police somewhere in England and Wales (NCA National Crime Agency, 2014). Thames Valley Police (TVP) reported an increase of 21% in missing people between 2011/2012 to 2012/2013 (NCA, 2014; SOCA Serious Organised Crime Agency, 2013; and NPIA, 2012). Preliminary data for 2013/2014 for TVP is expected to show another increase, with over 10,000 missing person reports. The prevention of crime and disorder, as laid out by Sir Robert Peel in 1829, has been at the very core of policing. At first glance, where missing people fit into this is not obvious. The volume of cases, competing demands and an increasing constraint on resources can lead to a view by some officers that missing person enquiries are of little importance and are taken less seriously (Hedges, 2002). A more systematic approach driven towards harm prevention is needed to help police prioritise and better target their resources. In pursuit of this aim, the present study identifies the profile of missing and absent people and the harm they experience. Furthermore, it critically evaluates the existing risk assessment scheme and provides a minimum estimated figure for the labour costs involved.

The study aims to link the characteristics of missing and absent people to the risk of different forms of harm. No causal link is claimed, but it is hoped that the findings help arrive at a better understanding of the importance of missing people and

the harm they experience. The difficulty police and researchers face in establishing what difference police intervention actually made without a randomised controlled experiment is recognised. However, given the politically sensitive nature and the wide range of vulnerable groups missing people encompass, such experiments may come with unacceptable risks or limited public support. The research proposal aims to answer the following research questions given the background provided thus far: 1) What types of missing and absent people experience (suffer and cause) crime harm?; 3) How accurate is the current risk assessment scheme at measuring crime harm? and 3) What are the estimated costs of missing and absent person investigations? Given the exploratory nature of the thesis, the Appendices include supplementary findings that are worthy of note but did not make it into the main body of the thesis (see Appendix 6 and Appendix 7).

Missing people should be considered as an indicator to other issues such as exploitation and criminal behaviour, therefore investigations into missing people must be regarded as a high-risk area of policing and thus given appropriate levels of resources (NPIA 2010). In 2013, The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) introduced the 'absent' category. The new category provides an opportunity to prioritise cases, since absent enquiries are dealt with by control room with limited police officer involvement. However, the decision between absent and missing can be both subjective in nature and based on professional judgement; therein potentially encouraging risk adverse attitudes towards harm. Such risk of harm is a key element in missing person enquiries. ACPO and the College of Policing (COP) recommended in their Interim Missing Persons Guidance (2013) that absences and missing reports

should be monitored for any trends and patterns that may indicate the individual's exposure to harm. However, as will be shown in the study, there is some way to go before such trends and patterns can be monitored accurately.

Before continuing, it is worth defining some of the key terms so that it is clear what the study is focused on:

Table 1: Table of Key Definitions

Term	Definition
Missing	*"Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another"* (COP 2013, pg.5).
Absent	*"A person not at a place where they are expect or required to be... and there is no apparent risk"* (COP 2013, pg.5).
Repeat Missing/Absent	The strict definition of 'repeat' will be used where a repeat missing person is someone who is reported missing two or more times over a six month period. This definition also adopted by the NCA in their missing persons annual reports.
Harm:	There does not appear to be an explicit definition of harm in the missing persons literature. The commonly held understanding of harm relates to physical injury. However, for the purpose of the proposed study, harm is said to exist in three situations: 1) self-inflicted physical injury; 2) the missing or absent person is a victim of a crime (harms by others); and 3) the missing or absent person is recorded as a suspect (harm to others). Category two and three relates to physical injury but may also be financial loss or social costs, such as theft, criminal damage or drugs offences.

The thesis is presented in six sections beginning with a review of the literature that focus on: 1) Characteristics, 2) Costs, 3) Crime Involvement, 4) Risk Assessment, and 5) Harm. The section that follows describes the methodology and how each research question will be addressed, along with a discussion on some of the

limitations. The results are then presented before concluding with a discussion and some recommendations.

Literature Review

Early into the study it became clear in the literature search that missing people, from a policing perspective is an area lacking research and absent people is near non-existent. Much of the research that is available lacks an empirical basis and suffers from methodological limitations. The following literature review will be broadly split into the following categories: 1) Characteristics, 2) Cost to Police, 3) Crime Involvement, 4) Risk Assessment and 5) Harm.

Characteristics

Biehal et al. (2003) conceptualised missing people as being situated on a continuum which ranges from intentional to unintentional, which they called 'the missing continuum' (see Appendices, Appendix 1). Such broad and simplistic categories fail to appreciate the complexity of missing people; it could be a combination of factors from both ends of the continuum that plays a role in the person going missing. To better understand this, there is a large proportion of literature into missing persons that use case studies as a method to identify characteristics. Written some time ago from an American perspective, one of the earliest pieces of writing in this area was by Ayers and Bird (1932).

Ayers and Bird (1932) explored missing person cases based on files from the Missing Persons Bureau of the New York City Police Department during the 15 years that Ayers was a commanding officer. They noted that during this period of time, the

bureau dealt with over a quarter of a million cases. They argued that there was an increasing trend of people reported as missing, an argument that may still hold true today due to the increasingly 'connected' world that we live in. Missing person cases exist usually due to a lost of perspective on the part of the individual missing; following individual difficulties which they are too close to objectively appraise and imagine them as insolvable (Ayers and Bird, 1932).

Ayers and Bird (1932) found that missing people who were murdered account for a 'few' of the cases, although the figure was not reported. They were surprised to find that only approximately 150 (0.06%) of the quarter of a million cases were suicides. When it came to juveniles they found that home conditions were responsible for most cases of missing young people. Ayers and Bird (1932) touched on reasons such as 'spirit of adventure', schoolwork and romance; adding that boys seldom come to harm. Kidnappings were also rare, and the Bureau dealt with no more than a dozen cases.

Interestingly, Ayers and Bird (1932) found that adults go missing more than juveniles: a ratio of about three to two, with men and women going missing in about the same proportion. This is in contrast to recent data for Police Forces in England and Wales, which revealed that children account for more missing incidents compared to adults (NCA 2014). By far the greatest proportions of missing people are those who disappear out of their own free will and not under any duress (Ayers and Bird 1932). Although Ayers and Bird's work may be over 80 years old, it is from a policing

perspective; providing valuable insight and allowing comparisons between these earlier observations with more recent literature.

More recently, through working in partnership with Grampian Police, The Metropolitan Police Service and other organisations, Parr and Stevenson (2013) used narrative interviews aimed at raising awareness of the 'missing experience': what it is really like from the point of view of the people missing (see also, Stevenson et al. 2013). Literature based on case studies and which is qualitative in nature has its benefits. The voices of those missing and returned play a vital role; they provide opportunities for organisations to use evidence-based practices to improve search strategies (Parr and Fyfe 2012). This is particularly relevant due to the recent introduction in some UK Police Forces of the 'Safe and Well' checks. These are interviews completed by police officers with every missing person that is found or returned based on a set list of points to consider. The aim of such interviews is to identify any harm they have come under or any crimes committed whilst missing. There is no research conducted on the effectiveness of these return interviews, given the resource and cost implications on the police. The present study will begin to address the lack of research in this area.

There are a host of reasons why someone would go missing, be it whereby it is the individual's choice or if it is forced upon them. In either case, missing people can become vulnerable to exploitation, risk getting embroiled in crime and suffer from other social difficulties (Payne 1995). The study by Payne (1995) was based solely on young people. The focus on young people is not new. Of the limited information

available on missing persons, the majority of material predominately examines missing juveniles (Hirschel and Lab 1988). This attention may be due in part to children potentially being more vulnerable to lack of care and attention (Payne 1995). Systematically going through 863 police missing persons report during 1984, Hirschel and Lab (1988) concluded that due to the diverse nature of the missing persons population, it is not possible to propose a single action to help prevent it. However, it is important to address the underlying issues or this pattern of behaviour will likely repeat. These issues are often complex and include: relationship breakdowns, financial and personal problems, escaping violence and abuse; avoiding arrest and mental heath breakdown (Biehal et al. 2003).

The study by Biehal et al. (2003) consisted of three stages: 1) database sample, 2) case file sample and 3) follow-up sample. The database sample drawn from the National Missing Persons Helpline was used to provide an overview of the missing person's characteristics. It had 1,611 new cases and 1,279 closed cases during a 12-month period between 1999 and 2000. They found that girls aged 13-17 and men aged 24-30 were the most likely to be reported as missing; men were reported missing far more frequently than women. Using a stratified random sample of 387 cases from the database sample, a case file sample was obtained. A follow-up sample was obtained through the use of a postal survey to 367 individuals who had been found and were still traceable. Of this group, 114 responded, providing a low response rate of 31%.

In summary, Biehal et al. (2003) found the following: 1) people aged between 13 to 17 were reported missing at a higher rate (16% of total) than other age groups; 2) after the age of 30, the number of people reported missing decreases as age increases; 3) adult men are reported far more frequently than women, accounting for 73% of those aged 24 or over; 4) girls aged 13-17 and men aged 24-30 are most likely to be reported missing; 5) the majority (86%) of missing people are white; 6) black and Asian people are more likely to go missing at a younger age; 7) women of Asian origin aged 18 to 23 were more likely to go missing than any other ethnic group; 8) 39% of people who go missing suffer from physical health and 9) 31% reported depression or other mental health problems. In terms of the findings surrounding Asian women, the authors made no comment as to a possible explanation. One could hypothesise that there may be underlying issues around Honour Based Violence and Domestic Violence.

Biehal et al. (2003) also found that 72% of adults in the follow-up sample (n=114) reported to have been missing once but 19% had gone missing three or more times. When it came to young people, these figures were 56% and 32% respectively. The study findings drawn from the database sample were considered statistically significant ($p < 0.01$, CI 99%). Results from the case file sample and follow-up sample had a lower threshold for statistical significance ($p = 0.5$, CI 95%). The policy implications of these results include raising awareness, support, prevention and working together (Biehal et al. 2003). The study does not appear to provide practical solutions or recommendations for police to save resources. Very few studies address this important point and it is hoped that the present study will examine this more closely.

Although a large proportion of research has focused on young missing people (many in local authority care and from a Social Services perspective), there are those who are also reported missing from hospitals and mental health wards (see Bartholomew et al. 2009, White and Montgomery 2015).

Costs

Any feeling that missing persons is a new phenomenon to British policing is misguided. As the literature review indicates thus far, it has been around for a very long time. It is an area that greatly impacts on policing and, with a recent high profile case in TVP (see CPS Crown Prosecution Service - Operation Bullfinch Trial), it is now getting the much-needed attention it requires. TVP cannot work in isolation. A national approach is critical, as Australia realised when they found the number of people reported missing exceeded the total number of victims reported for homicide, sexual assault and unarmed robbery combined (Henderson et al. 2000). An assessment of the economic and social costs of each missing person to the community is roughly estimated to be $2,360 Australian Dollars (Henderson et al. 2000). This cost includes search costs, loss of earnings for the family whilst they look for the missing person and legal and health costs.

A more recent estimate for the UK is based on two UK police forces: this figure is at £2,415.80 for each medium-risk and medium term missing person (Greene and Pakes 2013a). The two police forces were West Mercia and Warwickshire. The study utilised an online survey asking for staff to estimate the time they spend on missing

person enquiries together with analysing a 'typical representative real-life case' selected by a Detective Inspector. The study did not report the response rate for the online survey but indicated that 33 officers took part in judging the time it took to complete each missing person action for the typical representative case selected. The cost estimation takes into account maintenance, training, meetings, handovers and multiple house visits.

The study recognised some of its own limitations, not least that it relies entirely on police officer estimations. However, there are also issues surrounding external validity in terms of the small numbers of officers involved from only two police forces. Furthermore, the response rate of the online survey was not reported and that the 'real-life case' selection was based solely on the advice and views of one Detective Inspector; this may result in systematic response bias. It is questionable how representative the real-life case selected is in reality. These limitations aside, it is one of the best estimates available at this moment in time into the true costs of policing missing person enquiries. The present study hopes to improve on this by providing a more accurate estimate on the minimum cost of policing missing and absent person enquires. Excluding all other costs, the monetary costs alone led Greene and Pakes (2013a) to raise the notion of shared responsibility of police and other agencies, along with adding to the debate of outsourcing missing people investigations. The present study will provide a more accurate picture on the minimum cost of policing missing and absent people based on real data from actual cases, rather than the 'guestimate' approach adopted by Green and Pakes (2013a).

Crime Involvement

In terms of missing people and crime involvement, children who are placed in care placements tend to go missing more often than those living at home, but there was no statistical correlation between place of residence and number of arrests (Shalev 2011). The study by Shalev (2011) examined missing children in the context of their crime involvement. It focused on 51 children who had been reported missing more than three times in the Oxford area of TVP between 2005 and 2006. Each child was checked for previous offending history, based on arrest and conviction records. The results corroborated previous research (see Mervyn 2004; Rees 2001; Wade et al. 1998) to show that children who are placed in care placements tend to go missing more often than those living at home, but there was no statistical correlation between place of residence and number of arrests. The study also found: 1) shoplifting and theft together accounted for 22% of arrests; 2) battery and assaults (including GBH) accounted for 28% of arrests; 3) criminal damage accounted for 14% of arrests; 4) drug possession and rape was rare (2% each); 6) child protection and domestic incidents accounted for 12% and 7) 22% for other offences. Further research needs to be completed to develop an empirical understanding of the correlation between long-term criminal behaviour and children who go missing (Shalev 2011).

Hayden (2010) examined offending behaviour and children in residential care by looking at data from ten children's homes within England between 2001 and 2007. Together with a one-year cohort study of 46 youths and interviews, the study found that residential care environments reinforce offending behaviour. A large proportion

(62.4%) of calls to the police from the ten care homes related to youths being missing. There were a total of 1,451 calls per year with a range from 1,107 to 2,252. Offences of theft and assault accounted for about half of all offences recorded by the police against youths residing at the care homes. Hayden (2010) concluded that residential care environments can reinforce offending behaviour and can be seen as a 'criminogenic' environment. However, such a conclusion ignores the possibility that children who end up in care homes already have a propensity to offend. Rather than the care home environment reinforcing offending, these children may have offended regardless of where they are placed, such as foster care.

The findings by Hayden (2010) corroborated previous research by Abrahams and Mungall (1992) who found that 46% of those missing from children's homes had previous convictions, compared to 7% for those living at home. Offending occurred when children go missing from homes together in a group, with some crimes committed in order to survive outside the care system (Wade et al. 1998). Missing people experience a degree of harm whilst away due to threats, being attacked (one in eight) or being sexually assaulted (one in nine) (Biehal et al. 2003). Biehal et al. also found that age and reasons for going missing were key determinants of both outcomes and time missing: 1) overall, just 20% returned; 2) those aged 13 to 17 were most likely to return; 3) 63% of those who returned done so within one months and 4) 85% returned within six months. Of those who were found dead (36 out of the case sample size of 387), around 50% had committed suicide and a third had died as a result of coming to harm or were involved in an accident. The majority of those who committed suicide or who came to harm were male. Evidence of vulnerability was

often linked to recent periods of depression or previous attempts of suicide (Biehal et al. 2003). The authors recognised that the proportion of missing people found dead (10%) were far greater than police figures likely due to selection bias as the cases were drawn from the National Missing Persons Helpline (see Biehal et al. 2003 for details).

Establishing what missing people do and experience when they go missing is important. However, there is also a need to understand where people actually go when they are missing by completing a spatial analysis (Shalev et al. 2009). This would help police improve the targeting of their search areas; assist in locating the missing person sooner before they suffer harm and reduce the amount of police resources used to locate them (Shalev et al. 2009). This is particularly important given the current state of British Policing whereby all forces are undergoing significant budget cuts. Spatial analysis will require information relating to where the missing person went and were located to be more accurately recorded (Shalev et al. 2009). Unfortunately, this information is not accurately recorded at present in TVP (see Methodology Chapter). Finally, the existing literature is limited in terms of harm and no research has completed a temporal analysis, which the present study will examine.

Risk Assessment

A key issue for the police in missing person cases is the assessment of the likely risks. In reality, such assessments may not necessarily be rational and may be based on subjective perceptions resulting in under- and over- estimation of risk (Kemshall, 2010). As far back as the 1930s, the questions asked by police during a missing

persons report are not too dissimilar to what is incorporated into the risk assessment process today:

Table 2: Typical Questions Asked By Officers During Missing Persons Enquiries in 1930s (Ayers and Bird 1932)

No.	Question
1	What is the domestic background?
2	What is the business background?
3	What are the personal habits?
4	Who are the social and business associates?
5	Is there any serious illness or injury?
6	What is the person's temperament?
7	What is the person's cast of mind?

The risk assessment process is vital; It is the key determinant for the level of investigative activity that follows, where high risk attracts significant resources and oversight from senior officers (Smith and Greene 2014). The attitudes of police sergeants towards this process were evaluated in a study undertaken during Summer 2013 (Smith and Green 2014). The study used an online survey to obtain the opinions of 215 sergeants within a large unidentified police force. Although the results cannot be generalised due to the methodology adopted (unknown police force and small sample size), their research supports the view that risk ratings are often subjective and inconsistent. Following the report of a missing person, police decide at an early stage the level of resources required based on the classification of the missing person (Newiss 1999). This classification had traditionally been either 'vulnerable' or 'non-vulnerable' (see Home Office 1994). By 2002, police moved away from such

classification and moved towards risk gradings of 'high', 'medium' or 'low' (see ACPO 2002 and ACPO 2005). The risk gradings have been defined as follows:

Table 3: Risk Grading Definitions

Term	Definition
High	*"The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the subject is in danger through their own vulnerability; or may have been the victim of a serious crime; or the risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the public is in danger"* (ACPO 2005, pg.19).
Medium	*"The risk posed is likely to place the subject in danger or they are a threat to themselves or others"* (ACPO 2005, pg.19).
Low	*"There is no apparent threat of danger to either the subject or the public"* (ACPO 2005, pg.19).

The term 'danger' is used for missing persons risk gradings but it is not defined. The Oxford dictionary defines danger as "the possibility of suffering harm or injury". A further change was introduced in 2013 when ACPO added the classification 'absent', defined earlier. This is separate from those who are missing where they continue to have a risk grading. However, in any case where there is no apparent risk of harm, they will fall into the absent category (COP 2013). The absent category aims to help police distinguish between cases that require a police led response (missing), to those that do not (absent). However, at first glance, it is not clear how to distinguish between a low-risk missing person and an absent person. To aid officers in this decision-making process, The College of Policing issued an interim guidance (COP, 2013) to be used in conjunction with each Police Force's internal standard operating procedures (see Appendices, Appendix 2). If an individual's disappearance is not out of character and there is no information to indicate a crime or risk of harm, then they

would be characterised as absent. A low-risk missing person suggests there is no information to suggest risk of harm, but their disappearance may be out of character, which will require at least some basic enquiries. The difference is subtle but how they are managed and the cost implications differ significantly. Once a decision is made that an element of risk is present, thus requiring police involvement, the next step is to determine the level of response based on the risk grading. The process is described in more detail in Missing or Absent Persons Standard Operating Procedure (see Appendices, Appendix 5). Research is lacking in the following areas: missing persons risk grading, the subsequent level of police response and whether or not police intervention made any difference.

There is currently little research available on absent people. Greene and Pakes (2013b) used an online survey (response rate not reported) and a focus group to conclude that there was considerable variation on the view and management of absent people by call handlers, supervisors and missing person coordinators. The study compared six police forces and assessed their perceptions of what each force believed should be the definition of 'absent', how absent cases should be investigated and how they should be managed. 655 people took part in the study, but it is unclear from the study what the overall response rate was. One of the six forces had to be excluded from the final analysis due to only four participants taking part. As a result, the external validity of the results are limited.

Even with the introduction of missing and absent categories, together with risk gradings, police continue to face the difficult task of trying to identify those likely to

come to harm due to the large number (306,000 in England and Wales, NCA 2014) of missing people reported every year (Newiss 2004). Among this small subset is an even smaller group who have been the victim of a homicide. By analysing homicide cases that came to police attention through a missing person report, Newiss (2004) outlined how estimating the risk faced by different groups of missing people against the various outcomes could improve how police respond. The study looked at data from 14 police forces between 1990 and 1998. In total, 98 missing homicides were identified, 67% were adults and of all the homicides 68% were female victims.

At present, most police officers will base the risk assessment on professional judgement using the limited availability of information whilst factoring in other demands on their time and attention (Newiss, 2004). A more actuarial approach based statistical calculations of probabilities has its limitations, not least that it would be based on static historical and demographic factors which in the real world can fluctuate. A relatively small number of repeatedly missing children are graded as high-risk (Hayden and Goodship 2013) and only a minority reported injury, harm or criminal activity (Greene and Hayden, 2014). Such low base rates (rarity of adverse outcomes), coupled with the variety of cases, means that creating a statistical model of prediction based on probabilistic calculations is difficult (Kemshall, 2010; Tarling and Burrows, 2004). Furthermore, there may be cases which, given their unique characteristics, would fall outside the norm (Newiss, 2004); the use of a checklist style of approach could provide an excuse for inaction (Newiss, 1999). Indeed, Kemshall (2010) argued that: agency systems and processes, routinisation of tasks and increased bureaucracy can end up producing risk and pose a challenge to actuarialism.

Despite limitations, officers have suggested that a risk matrix style approach would be helpful (Newiss, 1999). The Metropolitan Police Service used such a method of calculating a risk score for a number of years before it was abandoned due to its low validity and the high level of false positives (Hedges, 2002). However, the risk matrix adopted was flawed from the start as it was based purely on opinion rather than research (Hedges, 2002). The creation of the risk matrix was based on a System 1, casual intuitive thinking, rather than the more engaged and analytical System 2 approach (Kahneman, 2011). Since then there has been apprehension to adopt a scoring approach, but to abandon the idea altogether without more research would be premature. Continued research is needed and it may be that the best way forward is a combination of professional judgement and actuarial approaches, on the back of further training to support the decision making and the risk assessment process (Newiss, 2004 and Alys et al. 2013).

Finally, an alternative view is that each missing person case requires a separate analysis since human beings are complex and a standardised plan of action cannot work (Ayers and Bird 1932). However, this comment was made during a period of time when computers and powerful statistical software had not been invented yet. It is now possible to analyse large datasets to identify patterns that could help formulate such a standardised plan of action, one that is based on severity and likelihood of harm. It may be that no patterns exist which would help systematically and accurately prioritise the vast numbers of missing person cases, but there is insufficient evidence to reach such a conclusion at present.

Harm

The current categories of risk for missing people as described above (high, medium, and low) uses the terms danger to themselves or the public, whereas the definition of a missing person includes the terms "risk of harm to themselves or another". The final part of the literature review addresses this issue of harm, which forms two out of the three key principles of evidence-based policing: 1) target scarce police resources on predictable concentrations of harm through the conduct and application of good research and 2) choose the best police methods to reduce harm by reviewing or conducting tests on those methods (Sherman, 2013). In order to identify concentrations of harm and to allow a comparison of different crime types, a measurement of harm is required.

Among the first scholars to attempt developing a system of defining and measuring the seriousness of a crime, through a 'seriousness scale', was Selling and Wolfgang (1964). They surveyed a range of groups including students, police officers, judges and community members by asking them to rank 141 crimes on a scale between 1 (least serious) to 11 (most serious). Such a scale is too small to capture the vast number of offences and to differentiate the various degrees of harm for different offences. Selling and Wolfgang (1964) highlighted that the current method of collecting and reporting crime data failed to represent the seriousness or harm of the crime. Although their methodology was criticised, their argument that the amount of crime should be combined with a measure of seriousness, was important and ignited a host of debate and further research into this area.

When it comes to harm and perceived seriousness of an offence, characteristics of victims and offenders are much less influential (Jacoby and Cullen 1998). The idea that all crimes are not equal (Sherman, 2013) led to a more recent development of the Cambridge Crime Harm Index (Sherman et al. 2014). They propose an index-based approach by adopting a ranking system which uses the starting point as the recommended sentence for a first time offender with no aggravating or mitigating factors. The Cambridge Crime Harm Index (CHI) is therefore based on the number of days in prison using the UK sentencing guidelines. The weighting of crimes based on the level of harm as opposed solely to the volume can be justified on democratic grounds, since most sentencing guidelines are scrutinised by elected officials through debate and opinion polls (Sherman et al. 2014). Furthermore, a focus on crime harm rather than crime counts would provide far greater clarity for cost-effectiveness comparisons and resource allocation (Sherman et al. 2014).

Implementing such a CHI to target police resources at missing people investigations would also align to TVP aims and objectives: *"Working in partnership to make our community safer (and) to protect our communities from the most serious harm"* (TVP Delivery Plan 2014-2015, pg.2 and 7). However, it should be noted that a CHI based on sentencing guidelines that are drawn from a 'policy by poll' approach is not encouraged (see Jacoby and Cullen 1998). The researchers highlight that almost any specific punishment will find supporters as well as opponents. It is also noteworthy that a CHI based purely on sentencing guidelines would exclude minor offences that do not attract custodial sentences. Devising a formula that would take into account such minor offences as well as incorporating non-crime harm would not

only increase complexity, but also bring with it further limitations and assumptions. A CHI is not perfect, but it is by far better at incorporating the degree of harm than simple count of offences.

The literature review has alluded to the possibility of what is known as the "power few" or the "Pareto Curve" in missing people investigations, both in terms of the missing individual and the location they are reported missing from (see Greene and Hayden, 2014). This is when the greatest amount of harm is actually created by a small percentage or a concentration of places, victims or offenders (Sherman, 2007). There are three aspects to the power few in terms of missing or absent individuals: 1) offenders who harm missing or absent people; 2) missing people who are harmed and 3) missing people who are offenders and cause harm to others. Protecting missing people by targeting resources using the CHI and identifying the power few may be a way forward to tackling the growing pressure in this area of policing. With a focus on the predictors of harm, it might help develop future assessment protocols (White and Montgomery, 2015).

As indicated by the review, despite the scale of missing persons and its occasional prominence within popular and political discourse, academic analysis in this key high-risk area of policing remains in it's infancy (Parr and Fyfe, 2012) and is completely lacking in certain areas. The existing literature has many shortcomings as described in the chapter. These range from: low sample sizes; use of surveys with low or unknown response rates; systematic response bias; external validity issues; incomprehensive and children focused; lacking temporal and spatial analysis; limited

quantitative studies based on large representative samples and limited research from a policing perspective. The proposed research aims to add to the knowledge in the following areas: 1) absent people; 2) harm caused to others and not just the missing person; 3) analysis of harm prior to and after the missing period, not just during; 4) application of CHI; 5) examining missing adults and not just children and 6) critically analysing the accuracy of the current risk assessment scheme at measuring harm.

Methodology

In summary, 5,984 missing or absent cases were examined involving 3,706 individuals over a six-month period between August 1st 2014 and January 31st 2015. The data will be treated as a sample and that inferential statistics will be used as part of the analysis in the results chapter. The following chapter will first describe the nature and quality of the data collected, and then establish the methods adopted to answer each question, before finally concluding with a discussion on internal and external validity.

Data Sources

Since April 29th 2014, all missing persons have been recorded onto a police system called the Niche RMS (Record Management System). Crime recording, intelligence and custody are also held on Niche. A significant advantage of this dataset is the ability to cross-reference and access different databases with much more ease, allowing many more variables to be analysed.

The absent category was implemented within TVP in April 2014. Consequently, Niche missing person reports will be analysed for six months, from August 1st 2014 to January 31st 2015. This has yielded 6,432 missing and absent person records. This was manually examined to remove 318 duplicate records and 40 records not classed as absent or missing (status left blank). Blanks and duplicate records occur due to technical or human error. These extra records would contain little information

because once discovered, only one will be used as the main record. 5,984 records were left for analysis.

Niche RMS has also been used to extract crime records relating to missing and absent persons. Niche RMS gives each individual a unique reference number; this number is used to cross-reference between the Niche RMS missing persons and the crime databases. For each absent or missing person, an algorithm was created to identify any associated crime records. Doing so identified offences perpetrated by and against missing or absent persons. Twelve months' worth of data has been extracted, from May 1st 2014 to 30th April 2015. This provided 13,322 crime and non-crime related records. 94 of these records were excluded from the analysis as they related to individuals amongst the missing or absent database who were not classified as missing or absent. 10,454 records were left for analysis after restricting the selected cases to only those that fit the following criteria: 1) which occurred whilst someone is missing or absent; 2) occurred three months period to reports missing or absent and 3) occurred three months after reported missing or absent.

Command and Control has been used to gather the number of officers and time spent on initial enquiries. Command and Control is the police despatch system used to record details of: the call made to police, the deployment of resources and the initial police enquiries. Once the initial enquiries are complete, the incident is transferred and managed within Niche RMS. Every call to the police is given a unique number on the system called a Unique Reference Number (URN). This is made up of a sequential number plus the date of the call. When a Niche RMS missing or absent

record is created, the URN is recorded within Niche. This is used to cross reference with Command and Control, providing 101,685 rows of data.

The PeopleSoft HR database was used to gather police officer experience levels. This provided a list of police officers and special constables currently employed by TVP during August 1st 2014 to January 31st 2015. Their joining dates were extracted which allowed experience levels based on number of days to be determined alongside the officers' approximate current hourly rate. This provided 5,657 records.

The TVP overtime database, Duty Management System (DMS), was interrogated. DMS allows officers to record their booking on and booking off time. If an officer works more than their scheduled tour of duty, the system automatically creates an overtime form. Here, the officer would enter the reason for the overtime under a set list of categories. Data was extracted for the period August 1st 2014 to January 31st 2015, providing 36 records.

Analysis

The analytical methodologies to be adopted to address the three principle research questions are as follows:

What types of missing and absent people experience (suffer and cause) crime harm?

Throughout the thesis, the term 'experience crime harm' is used to refer to both being a victim of a crime (suffer harm) or a suspect of a crime (cause harm). Data has been

obtained from Niche Intelligence, Niche Custody and Niche Crime databases. From the databases, to assess the harm to the missing or absent person, any offences recorded against the individual where they are shown as a victim, has been converted to a CHI for each offence. The CHI has been calculated using the Crime Harm Menu produced by Weinborn et al. (2015). Where a child or adult protection record is created because the individual has harmed or killed themselves, the comparative offence has been used. For example, where individuals have killed themselves, the CHI for murder has been used; where an individual was suffering from a mental health episode, a CHI value of 10 (equivalent to assault occasioning actual bodily harm) was applied. Similarly, to assess the harm to others, offences where they have been shown as a suspect will also have the CHI weighting applied.

The periods of time harm data has been collected is three months prior to reported missing, during missing and three months after missing. Doing this takes into account the complexity of missing persons and the view that missing person enquiries should not be treated as an event in isolation, but rather an indicator to other issues. The software package SPSS has been used to complete inferential statistical analysis. Additionally, the research hopes to at least begin the examination and analysis of those recorded under the new absent category.

How accurate is the current risk assessment scheme at measuring crime harm?

The study has examined the extent to which actual harm based on the CHI correlated to the predicted harm based on the risk assessment grading. It has determined the level of false positives and false negatives. The word counts of the risk assessment have been used to determine if the level of detail correlate with the level of harm or

help to locate the missing person sooner. Furthermore, the word counts of the Safe and Well checks have been used to see if it assists in reducing the number of those repeated missing.

What are the estimated costs of missing and absent person investigations?

Command and Control, PeopleSoft HR and PeopleSoft HR has been used to estimate the direct costs in terms of salary and time to police missing people. For each missing or absent report, the exact officer experience level was calculated to determine the pay point to be used to calculate salary costs. This improves the accuracy of the cost calculations. The time each officer spends on initial enquires has been obtained through Command and Control. It is believed this is the first time such a precise and detailed examination has been undertaken.

Data Issues and Limitations

Like many datasets, there is a range of limitations within any police system. The following is a brief summary of the issues and limitation of TVP's systems.

Command and Control

The system is used by control room to despatch officers to incidents. It relies on the officer calling up on the radio or pressing a button on their handset to update the system that have arrived or left a scene. Sometimes both officers forget and Control Room staff forget to check. As a result, officers may be shown as having dealt with the incident for longer than they have in reality. Having said this, due to attendance time

requirements and the pressure for officers to deal with jobs quickly to move onto the next, it is not expected that this will skew the results. There are three tiers of checks to ensure officers attend jobs, update their status and are deployed to the next job accurately and quickly: 1) control room despatch staff; 2) control room sergeants and 3) local area sergeants. If incidents are not attended in accordance with policy or dealt with quickly, they are escalated in that order to ensure it is known at all times what officers are committed with.

Niche

One of the biggest limitations of any police system is consistency and accuracy of the information recorded; data such as: reported time, whether someone is missing or absent (initially absent but upgraded to missing without the database being updated), location missing from, location found (at present the found location is the same as the return location), time returned and risk grading. The accuracy of any variables deemed unacceptable will be excluded altogether. During the initial months after the Niche RMS was introduced, there were a high number of reports where a risk grading was not electronically recorded. This was due to officers being unfamiliar with the software and how to use it properly. As the months have gone by, this number has steadily reduced, likely due to officers getting used to the new software and senior management push for compliance. In addition, each Basic Command Unit (BCU / Hub) has a Missing Persons Co-ordinator who quality assures all missing and absent person reports.

It should be noted that although there may be no electronic recording of the risk grading, all missing persons reports should have a risk grading recorded on the GEN35. The GEN35 is the missing persons risk assessment document officers complete for each incident. Any blanks in the Niche RMS risk grading have been filled using the paper copy of the GEN35 or the application of policy described later (see Appendices, Appendix 5). Additionally, any child under ten years of age, where there is no risk grading recording electronically or on the GEN35, will be given a risk grading of high. This is because operationally, they would be treated as such. At no point will an incorrect or blank risk classification be corrected retrospectively, as the initial risk grading (recorded or not) is important; it was used to aid decision making at the time. The raw data with any blanks has also been retained for analysis.

Another limitation with Niche RMS as it currently stands is that the location where the missing or absent person is located and where they are returned to, is the same field. Consequently, this makes it impossible to determine whether the address recorded is where the person was originally found or where they ultimately returned. It is recognised that this is a major weakness in the data, in terms of accurately determining where missing people are likely to be found. Related to this is the difficulty of analysing locations when postcodes are not always recorded. Furthermore, even if recorded, once the data has been retrieved for analysis, the address is written as one string of text. This has meant that considerable time was spent separating out the postcodes for each record. Online mapping software was used to identify the missing postcodes. It was important to separate out the postcode so that distances could be calculated. There were 772 missing or absent cases that

had the full found at or returned to address but had missing postcodes. These were manually corrected by searching for the addresses online to obtain the postcode. Doing so, allowed 580 of those cases to be included in the analysis bringing the total number of cases to 3,353. However, this still left 1983 (33%) of missing or absent reports with a location missing preventing distance calculations.

The system allows for an individual to have multiple roles in an investigation. The dataset returned 397 combinations of person roles. This meant that each of the associated records had to be examined one by one to determine which was the lead role. For example, an individual can have all four of the following roles: suspect, offender, charged and no further action, whereas another combination could be just suspect and charged. The study has simplified the roles by only allowing an individual for a record to be listed as one out of six roles: 1) deceased, 2) mental health, 3) subject, where it was not possible to distinguish between victim or suspect, 4) suspect, 5) victim and 6) witness.

PeopleSoft HR

The officer join dates are used to estimate their hourly rate but this does not take into account any regular subsistence or allowances they receive when it came to cost calculations.

Duty Management System (DMS)

It is not possible to determine the number of officers who claim overtime related to missing or absent person enquiries. The system only records the total cash value of

overtime relating to specific missing person operations where a code has been created. Specific overtime codes are only created when an investigation is expected to be extensive and a number of officers would be involved. In any other case, officers use generic codes that does not identify that the overtime is related to a missing person investigation. Furthermore, there are a large number of categories, so sometimes officers select the incorrect one.

Harm

It is recognised that missing persons not only experience crime harm, but also non-crime harm such as suicide or self-harm. When police are notified of a sudden death that is suspicious or believed to be a suicide, a record is created on Niche. These records are included in the analysis. In terms of potential or actual self-harm not resulting in death, officers have the option of creating a section 136 Mental Health Act occurrence and an adult or child protection occurrence. These are also included for analysis; however, officers do not always remember to create these occurrences, as it is not compulsory.

Internal Validity

Despite the limitations outlined above, the study retains strong internal validity for the following reasons. The time frame of the study was deliberately chosen to take into account the introduction of the absent category as well as the new Niche RMS database. This ensured that a national policy and standard operating procedure were in place, thus allowing a greater chance of consistency, accuracy and reliability of the

data recorded. The data is subject to national standards that are checked by the headquarters Strategic Performance Team and local audit by the Missing Persons Co-ordinator. Furthermore, Niche RMS missing persons data was collected three months after its introduction. This allowed for some 'bedding-in' time so that any initial data quality issues are minimised. The Niche RMS Crime database was introduced a year earlier and subject to daily checks by local Scrutineers who are responsible for ensuring that crime has been recorded accurately according to the Home Office Crime Recording Standards.

External Validity

TVP is the largest non-metropolitan police force in England and Wales, made up of both large areas of urban and rural, together with areas of high deprivation as well as affluence. The Missing Persons: Data and Analysis 2012/2013 report by the NCA (2014) showed that TVP had 4.3 missing person incidents per 1000 population. This compared to an average of 4.8 for all Police Forces in England and Wales. With time, the ability to replicate the study will increase as more forces become familiar with the new absent category and as the recording of missing people improves. There is opportunity to significantly increase the sample size, not only with TVP, but also through working together with other forces that have also adopted Niche RMS.

Finally, 'statistical confidentiality' (see Duncan et al. 2011) is an important consideration to ensure anonymity; for example, names have been excluded from the dataset altogether. The data has also been secured using 256-bit AES encryption. It is

recommended that readers unfamiliar with how police manage missing or absent persons investigations refer to the Appendices, Appendix 5: Missing / Absent Persons Standard Operating Procedures. It would provide a better understanding of how TVP currently manage such investigations.

Results

This chapter will present the key results by addressing each research question in turn. The topics considered in the following order are:

Table 4: Results Chapter Topics

Research Question	Topic
What types of missing and absent people suffer and cause crime harm?	1) No crime harm
	2) Crime harm
	3) Non-crime harm
	4) CHI
How accurate is the current risk assessment scheme at measuring crime harm?	5) Return of own accord
	6) Low risk missing children
	7)Absent children
	8) Current risk assessment scheme
What are the estimated costs of missing and absent person investigations?	9) Missing
	10) Absent

Summary Key Findings

Before proceeding with the results in detail, it would be useful to provide a summary of the key findings. Due to the vast sample size, other findings that are noteworthy but did not make it into the main body of the thesis has been included in the Appendices, Appendix 6: Supplementary Findings, which includes characteristics, repeat missing individuals or locations, absconders from hospital or local authority care and temporal analysis.

Table 5: Summary of Key Finding

No.	Summary of Key Findings
1	16% of absent reports were given an urgent grading and 1% graded as immediate.
2	85% were treated as missing and 15% were treated as absent.
3	Children are more likely to be repeatedly missing, with an average seven times for a child compared to twice for an adult.
4	Children in care more liklely to be repeatedly missing, with an average of 13 times.
5	15 to 17 year olds accounted for the greatest number of reports, with 35% of missing and 40% of absent reports.
6	82% of missing and 84% of absent individuals have not been reported missing or absent previously.
7	Repeat missing and absent individuals accounted for 47% and 44% of all missing and absent reports respectively.
8	32% of missing individuals were located within one mile of where they went missing.
9	The busiest time for missing reports was between 22:00 and 22:59, whereas for absent reports was between 23:00 and 23:59.
10	1.1% of individuals experienced crime harm whilst they were missing or absent, with 0.7% causing harm and 0.4% suffering harm; i.e. 98.9% do not experience any crime harm.
11	The top five associated crime offences whilst someone was missing were: 1) assault occasioning actual bodily harm; 2) shoplifting; 3) common assault; 4) criminal damage; and 5) burglary.
12	Children are more likely to be involved in sexual offences compared to adults.
13	The top five associated non-crime occurrences whilst someone was missing were: 1) child protection; 2) risk management; 3) domestic incident (no offences disclosed); 4) bail offences; and 5) adult protection.
14	Missing females were slightly more likely to have an associated mental health, domestic non-recordable, adult protection or child protection occurrence.
15	The average CHI value of associated occurences whilst someone is missing is far greater than the three months before or after they were missing.
16	People from local authority care were likely to have a higher CHI value.
17	The more officers are able to engage with the missing person during the Safe and Well interview, the more likely they are to identify those who experience harm.
18	There is a positive relationship between the number of times someone is reported missing or absent and their average CHI value.
19	At least 14% of mising people returned of their own accord and younger people more likely to do so.
20	13% of missing cases were graded by police as low risk, 68% as medium and 16% as high, with children more likely to be graded as high risk.
21	High risk missing people are no more likely than low risk to be involved in crime as a victim or suspect whilst they are missing.
22	The higher the risk grading, the more likely they are to have a higher average CHI value.
23	The risk of death whilst missing is extremely low, with only 0.05% of individuals were identified as have died whilst missing.
24	The average police officer labour cost of initial enquries for each absent case is £195 compared to £310 for missing, with low risk being £204, medium risk £248 and high risk £665.

What types of missing and absent people experience (suffer and cause) crime harm?

It is beneficial to first identify the types of individuals who do not experience any crime harm (suffer or commit crime) from the dataset. The chapter will then look at specific crimes types before attempting to assess non-crime harm that missing people experience and concluding with the application of the CHI.

No Crime Harm

3,706 individuals accounted for the 5,984 missing and absent reports in the dataset, with most having not been reported missing or absent before, as described earlier. 2,417 (65%) of those individuals had at least one associated crime occurrence created whilst missing, the three months before and three months after they were missing or absent. They were recorded as a suspect or victim. This number reduces to 1,290 (35%) when non-crime occurrences are excluded. That is to say, 65% of individuals reported missing or absent came to no crime harm or committed any crime either: during, three months before or three months after a missing episode, based on associated incidents that were recorded.

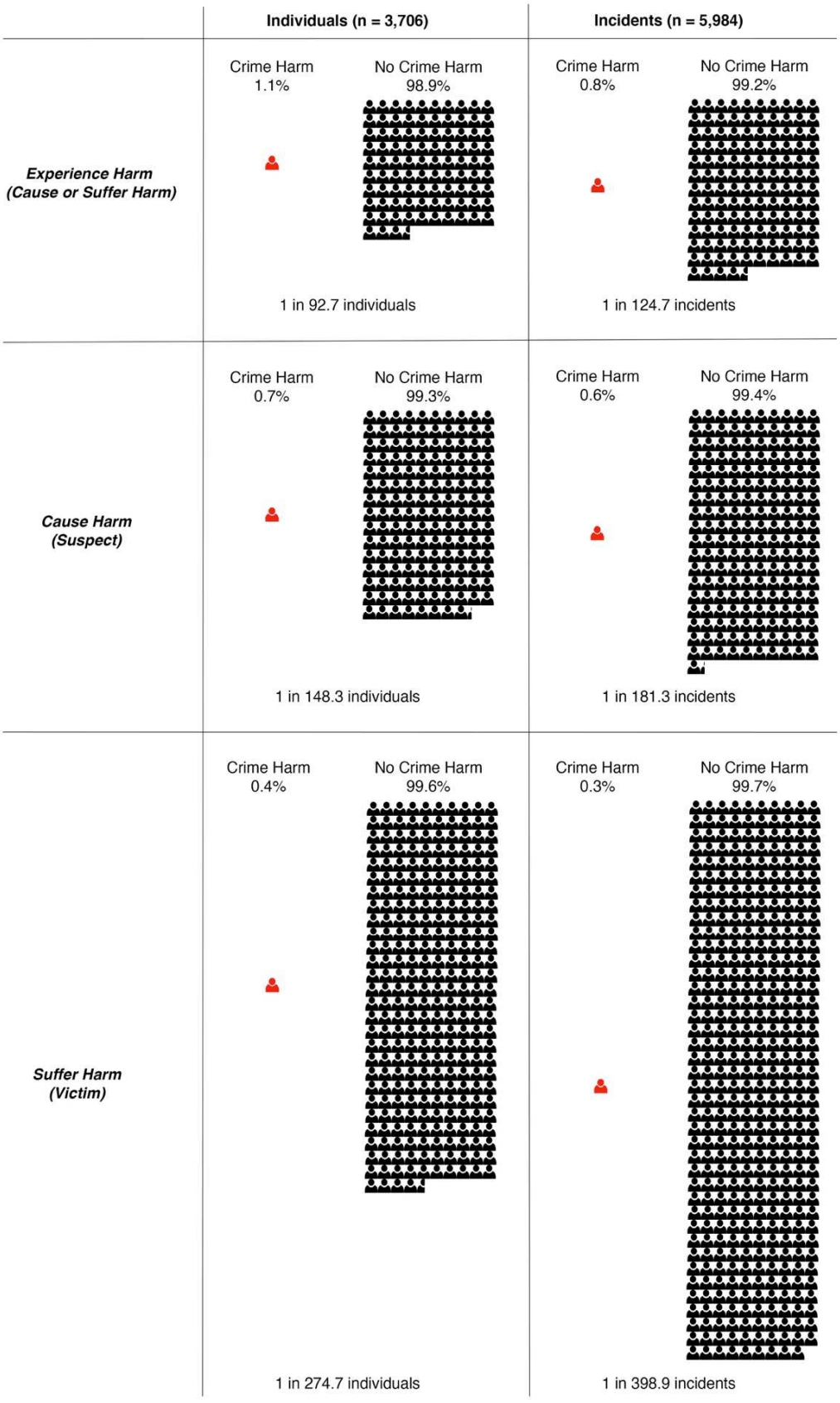
When focusing on crime occurrences that occurred whilst someone was missing or absent, approximately 99% of missing or absent people did not experience any crime harm. Only 40 (1.1%) out of the 3,706 individuals were identified as having an associated crime occurrence created during a period of time they were missing or absent over a six-month period. One person had two different associated crime occurrences where they were recorded as a suspect in one and a witness in another.

Excluding this person, 25 (0.7%) of the individuals were recorded as a suspect, with the remaining 14 (0.4%) recorded as a victim or witness. Even when non-crime occurrences were included, only 72 (1.9%) individuals were identified leaving the vast majority of individuals not experiencing any form of recorded harm (98%).

When each missing or absent incident rather than individual is examined, it showed that out of the 5,984 missing or absent incidents, 48 (0.8%) of those had an associated crime occurrence created whilst the individual was missing or absent. Of the 48 associated crime occurrences, 4 relate to an absent incident and 44 relate to a missing incident. 33 (0.6%) of the missing or absent incidents had an associated crime occurrence where the person was recorded as a suspect compared to 15 (0.3%) recorded as a victim or witness.

As can be seen, regardless of whether associated crime occurrences are identified based on the missing individual or by cross referencing each missing or absent incident, the results indicate that the likelihood of crime harm and non-crime harm may be very low.

Figure 1: Proportion of Individuals and Missing or Absent Incidents with an Associated Crime Occurrence Created Prior to the Person Being Located



Gender: Males were slightly more likely than females to not experience any crime harm (Chi-square = 20.22, p = 0.000, n = 5984, Cramer's v = 0.58), whereas 49% of males did not have an associated crime occurrence compared to 48% of females.

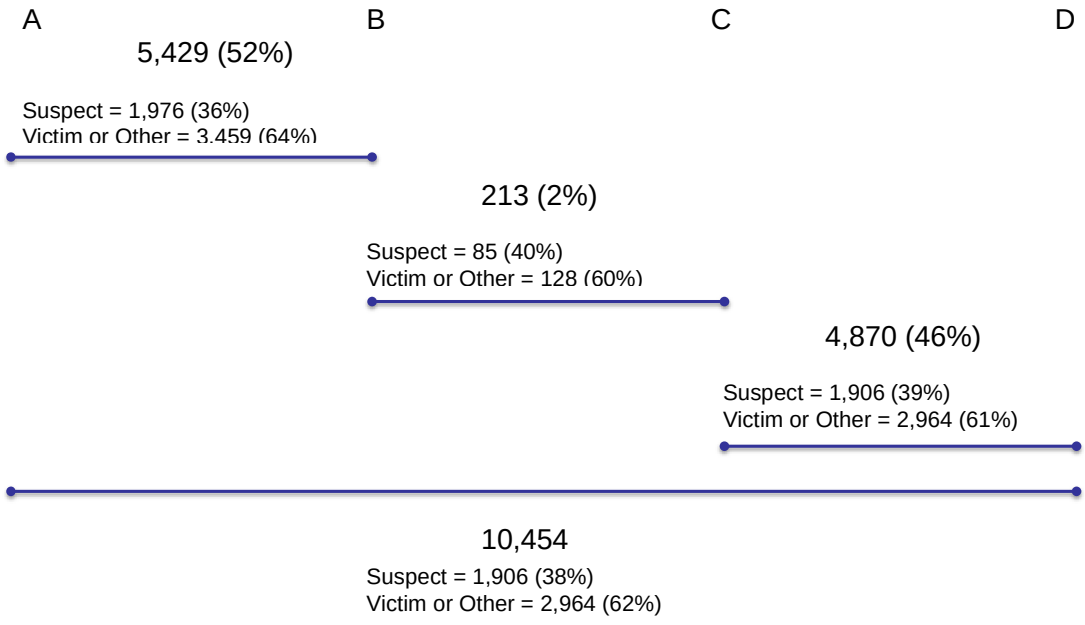
Age: Older people are less likely to experience crime harm whilst missing or absent (t (1342) = -29.23, p = 0.000, n = 5887), with the mean average age for those without an associated crime occurrence being 26 compared to 17 for those with an associated crime occurrence. Once the ages are grouped, those aged 15 to 17 are much more likely than any other age group to have an associated crime occurrence created whilst missing (Chi-square = 317.80, p = 0.000, n = 5887, Cammer's v = 0.23). 293 (5%) missing or absent reports were identified as having individuals who have had an associated crime occurrence created whilst they were missing or absent over a six month period. 244 (4.1%) relates to individuals aged 15 to 17; 38 (0.6%) relate to those aged 18 to 25; two (0.1%) relate to under 14 and nine (0.2%) relate to those aged 26 or over.

Type: Individuals who abscond from hospital are much less likely to have an associated crime occurrence compared to people from local authority care. 57% of absconders from hospital did not have an associated crime occurrence compared to only 17% of those from local authority care (Chi-square = 237.25, p = 0.000, n = 5027, Cramer's v = 0.22).

Crime Harm

There were 10,454 associated crime and non-crime related records. 5,429 (52%) were created during the three months prior to someone who was missing or absent; 213 (2%) were created whilst someone was missing or absent and 4,870 (46%) were created during the three months after someone was missing or absent. A greater proportion of individuals were recorded as victims across all time periods. Overall, 62% of the associated crime and non-crime related records had the missing or absent person recorded as a victim. The three months prior and after someone was missing is an attempt to take into account that people going missing may relate to other underlying issues.

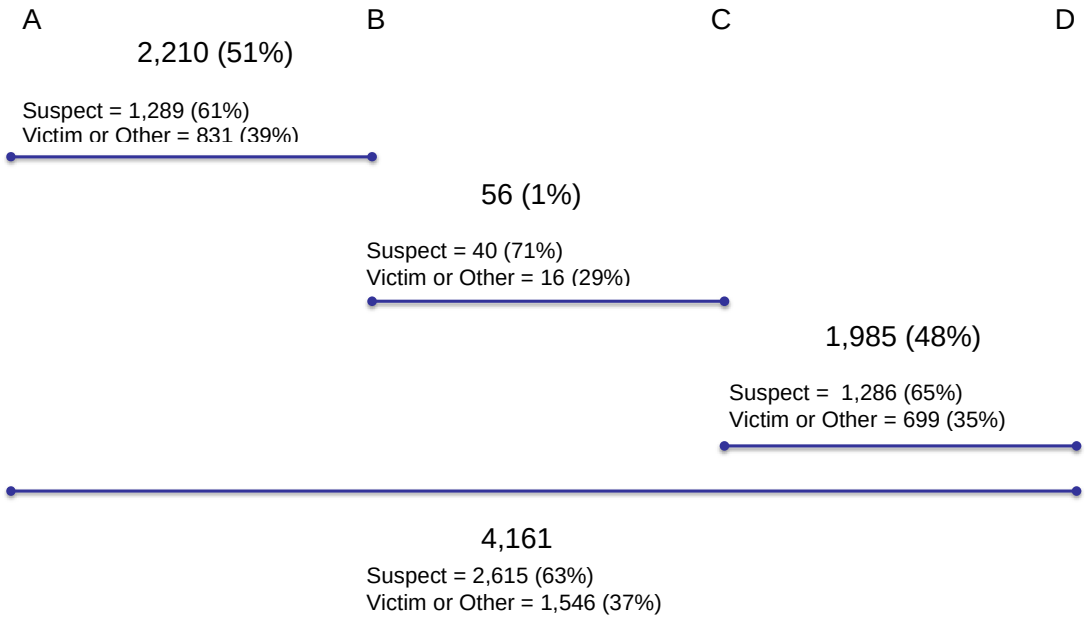
Figure 2: Proportion of Crime and Non-Crime Related Occurrences



A = 3 Months Prior Report of Missing
B = Date of Missing or Absent Report
C = Date of Missing or Absent Person Return / Found
D = 3 Months After Report of Missing

There were 4,161 associated crime related records. 2,120 (51%) were created during the three months prior to someone was missing or absent; 56 (1%) were created whilst someone was missing or absent and 1,985 (48%) were created during the three months after someone was missing or absent. A greater proportion of individuals were recorded as a suspect across all time periods. Overall, 63% of the associated crime related records had the missing or absent person recorded as a suspect.

Figure 3: Proportion of Crime Related Occurrences



A = 3 Months Prior Report of Missing
B = Date of Missing or Absent Report
C = Date of Missing or Absent Person Return / Found
D = 3 Months After Report of Missing

Of the 56 associated crime occurrence created whilst someone if missing or absent, 40 (71%) of those are when the missing or absent person was recorded as a suspect. The average age of the missing or absent person was 20, with 33 (59%) under

18. Males accounted for 40 (71%) occurrences compared to 16 (29%) for females. The top five offences were: 1) assault occasioning actual bodily harm, 2) shoplifting, 3) common assault, 4) criminal damage and 5) burglary.

Table 6: Specific Crime Occurrences Created Whilst Someone is Missing or Absent

Offence	Count
Assault occasioning actual bodily harm	7
Shoplifting	7
Common assault and battery	5
Other criminal damage under £5000 dwelling	5
Domestic Burglary - Theft or criminal damage only	4
Theft from the person of another - Theft Only	3
Theft in a dwelling other than from automatic machine or meter	3
Robbery - Personal	2
Theft of pedal cycle	2
Arson not endangering life	1
Assault with intent to Rob - Personal	1
Breach of restraining order	1
Cause a female person to engage in sexual activity without consent no penetration	1
Class B Possession of Cathinone derivative incl Mephedrone	1
Domestic Burglary (Attempts Only) - Theft or criminal damage only	1
Drugs wef 26/1/09 Possession of cannabis class B	1
Having an article with a blade or point in a public place	1
Other criminal damage under £5000 other	1
Possessing or distributing prohibited weapons designed for discharge of noxious liquid etc	1
Rape of female over 16 years	1
Rape of female under 16 years	1
Sex activity with a female child under 16 penetration offender 18	1
Sexual assault on a female 13 or over	1
Supplying a scheduled substance to another person	1
Take/make/publish indecent photo/pseudophoto of a child	1
Theft if not classified elsewhere	1
Theft of a motor vehicle	1
Total	56

Due to the low base rate of occurrences created whilst someone is missing, all 4,161 associated crime-related records will now be looked at more closely. First, various characteristics will be cross-referenced against their roles (victims or suspects) to provide an indication on crime harm caused versus crime harm suffered.

Gender and Role: Males are more likely to be suspects in associated crime occurrences compared to females who are more likely to be victims, where 76% of suspects are males and 64% of victims are females (Chi-square = 498.91, p = 0.000, n = 3607, Cramer's v = 0.26).

Age and Role: Missing or absent people who are victims of an associated crime occurrence are more likely to be younger than when they are suspects of a crime (t (3217) = 4.71, p = 0.000, n = 3219). The mean age the missing or absent person is when they are a suspect is 24 compared to 22 when they are a victim. Children account for 50% of associated crime occurrences and similar to all age groups are more likely to be suspects than victims (Chi-square = 102.21, p = 0.000, n = 3607, Cramer's v = 0.08). 51% of children aged 14 or under were suspects compared to 35% victims. For 15 to 17 years old, this was 60% and 29% respectively.

Crime Types

Associated crime occurrences are categorised into general and specific crime types. 36% of the associated crime occurrences relates to violence against the person; 30% for theft; 10% for criminal damage and 10% for sexual offences. Males are more likely to be involved in all general crime types apart from sexual offences (Chi-square = 357.64, p = 0.000, n = 3607, Cramer's v = 0.32). Children were more likely to be involved in sexual offences, accounting for 8% of crime associated occurrences compared to adults who accounted for 3% (Chi-square = 292.01, p = 0.000, n = 3607, Cramer's v = 0.14). When it came to specific crime types, common assault, assault

occasioning actual bodily harm, shoplifting, criminal damage, theft and other accounted for 48% of associated crime occurrence (n = 3596).

Non-Crime Harm

It is recognised that missing and absent people may also suffer other harm that is not crime related. It is difficult to quantify emotional harm or physical self-inflicted harm from the variables available in the dataset. However, as an attempt to incorporate this into the analysis, non-crime related occurrences would now be included in the analysis. Of the 213 associated occurrences created whilst someone if missing or absent, 85 (40%) of those are when the missing or absent person was recorded as a suspect. The average age of the missing or absent person was 24, with 112 (53%) under 18. Males accounted for 126 (59%) compared to 87 (41%) for females. The top five occurrence types were: 1) child protection, 2) risk management, 3) domestic incident (no offences disclosed), 4) bail offences and 5) adult protection.

Table 7: Crime and Non-Crime Occurrences Created Whilst Someone is Missing or Absent

Occurrence Type / Offence	Count
Child Protection (Non Crime Incident)	62
Risk Management Occurrence	22
Domestic Incident (non crime incident)	20
Bail Offences	16
Adult Protection (non crime incident)	14
Shoplifting	8
Assault Without Injury	7
Warrants Management	7
Burglary In A Dwelling (Excluding Attempts)	6
Criminal Damage To Dwellings	5
Section 136 Mental Health Act - non crime incident	5
Assault with Injury	4
Other - Any Indictable Or TEW Offence Not Separately Classified	4
Theft From The Person - Theft Only	3
Theft In A Dwelling	3
Action Fraud Cri - Call For Service	2
Robbery Of Personal Property	2
Sexual Assault on a Female aged 13 and over	2
Theft Or Unauthorised Taking Of Pedal Cycle	2
Arson	1
Assault Without Injury On Constable	1
Criminal Damage - Other	1
Drink Drive	1
Drug Possession - Cannabis	1
Drug Possession - Excluding Cannabis	1
Drug Supplying (Incl. Possession W/I To Supply)/Production/Cultivation	1
Harassment - All Offences Under Harassment Act	1
MoPI Management Occurrence	1
Other Offences against the State or Public Order	1
Other Theft	1
Possession of Other Weapons	1
Rape of a Female aged 16 and over	1
Rape of a Female Child under 16	1
Road Traffic Offence	1
Sexual Activity involving a Child under 16	1
Theft Or Unauthorised Taking Of Motor Vehicle	1
Unexplained Death (CRI)	1
Wasting Police Time PND - CRI	1
Total	213

Due to low base rates of occurrences created whilst someone is missing, all associated occurrences will be examined (n = 10,454). As a reminder, this figure includes occurrences created up to three months prior to someone being reported missing or absent, whilst they are missing, and up to three months after someone is found. Doing so showed that 176 (2%) of these occurrences relate to the missing or absent person being given a mental health role and there were 287 (3%) that were recorded as a Section 136 Mental Health Act occurrence. Section 136 of Mental Health Act gives the police the power to remove a person who appears to be suffering from a mental disorder from a public place if the person is deemed to be in immediate need of care. 1,161 (11%) relate to domestic non-recordable occurrences. This is when a domestic incident occurs but no recordable crime was disclosed. A record is created for a risk assessment and for appropriate partner agencies to be notified. A quarter of occurrences relate to child or adult protection, with 908 (9%) relating to an adult protection occurrence and 1,686 (16%) relating to a child protection occurrence. Adult and child protection occurrences are created when officers feel there is some concern about the incident which warrants a record being created and appropriate partner agency referrals being made.

Mental Health: Females are slightly more likely to have a mental health related associated occurrence (Chi-square = 10.55, p = 0.005, n = 9002, Cramer's v = 0.03), where 1.7% of associated mental health occurrences relate to females compared to 1.5% for males. Furthermore, a missing or absent person with an associated mental health occurrence is likely to be an individual older than someone who does not (t (9000) = 8.07, p = 0.000, n = 9002). The mean age of missing or absent person with an

associated mental health occurrence was 33, compared to 26 for someone who does not.

Domestic Non-Recordable: Females with an associated occurrence are slightly more likely to have a domestic non-recordable occurrence than males (Chi-square = 6.31, p = 0.04, n = 9002, Cramer's v = 0.03). 14% of females with an associated occurrence were for domestic non-recordable compared to 12% for males. A missing or absent person with a domestic non-recordable associated occurrence is likely to be older than someone who does not (t (9000) = 7.08, p = 0.000, n = 9002). The mean age of missing or absent person with an associated domestic non-recordable occurrence was 29, compared to 26 for someone who does not.

Adult Protection: Excluding child cases from the dataset, females with an associated occurrence are more likely to have an adult protection occurrence than males (Chi-square = 28.54, p = 0.000, n = 5032, Cramer's v = 0.08). 21% of females with an associated occurrence were for adult protection compared to 15% for males. A missing or absent person with an adult protection associated occurrence is likely to be older than someone who does not (t (1049) = 15.22, p = 0.000, n = 5032). The mean age of missing or absent person with an associated adult protection occurrence was 44, compared to 33 for someone who does not.

Child Protection: Excluding adult cases from the dataset, females with an associated occurrence are more likely to have a child protection occurrence than males (Chi-square = 125.67, p = 0.000, n = 3970, Cramer's v = 0.18). 46% of females with an

associated occurrence were for child protection, compared to 29% for males. A missing or absent person with child protection associated occurrence is likely to be younger than someone who does not ($t(2517) = -7.35$, $p = 0.000$, $n = 3970$). The mean age of missing or absent child with an associated child protection occurrence was 14, compared to 15 for someone who does not.

Crime Harm Index

The results so far indicate that the likelihood of an individual having an associated record created, be it crime or non-crime related whilst they are missing or absent, is rare. However, it is important to understand the severity of harm missing or absent people cause and suffer. It may be that although likelihood of harm being rare, the severity still justifies the current level of police resources. All associated crime records that occurred three months before, three months after and during the period of time someone is missing or absent, has had the CHI applied based on the CHI Menu (Weinborn et al. 2015). The 287 Section 136 Mental Health Act occurrences have given been a crime harm value of 10, equivalent to an assault occasioning actual bodily harm crime. It is to take into account potential self-harm such as attempting to overdose and cutting of the skin. As can be seen later, death by suicide or murder following someone being reported missing is extremely rare. All the crime harm values for occurrences created whilst someone was missing or absent have been weighted by the average numbers of days missing for that individual. The crime harm for occurrences created three months before and three months after has been weighted by 90 days. This allows for the three periods of time to be compared and better the degree of harm people experience before and after they are missing or

absent. Again, this takes in to account the view that missing incidents should not be seen as an event in itself but as indicators of other underlying issues.

In terms of associated occurrences created three months prior to someone missing, the average CHI value is 1.4 (min = 0, max = 2367.6, sd. = 36.3, n = 5429). This value is approximately equivalent to an offence of shoplifting. Males had an average CHI value of 0.9, compared to 2.1 for females; this difference was not significant. There was also no significant relation between age and the CHI value. With two extreme values excluded, the average was 0.8. This is roughly equivalent to a racially aggravated common assault. Again, excluding two extreme values, children aged 15 to 17 were likely to have the highest CHI value compared to other age groups (f (4) = 6.57, p = 0.000, n = 5427). The average CHI value for: someone 14 or under was 0.9; 15 to 17 was 1.4; 18 to 25 was 0.5; 26 to 64 was 0.4 and 65 or over is 0.1.

The average CHI value of associated occurrences three months after someone is found from being missing or absent is 1.0 (min = 0, max = 1159, sd. = 17.9, n = 4870). Males and females had the same average CHI value of 1.0. There was also no significant relation between age and the CHI value. Excluding one extreme value, children were likely to have a higher CHI value than adults (f (4) = 3.55, p = 0.007, n = 4869). The average CHI value for someone: 14 or under was 1.1, compared to 1.1 for 15 to 17 year olds, 0.6 for 18 to 25, 0.4 for 26 to 64 and zero for 65 or over.

The average CHI value of associated occurrences whilst someone is missing or absent is 24.8 (min. 0, max. 2367.6, sd. 186.6, n = 213), far higher than the CHI value

pre or post missing. This is more harm than an assault grievous bodily harm but less than abandoning a child. Males had an average CHI value of 18.6, compared to 34 for female; this difference was not significant. There was also no significant relation between age and the CHI value. As the number of cases is relatively small, excluding the two occurrences where the CHI value was greater than 1000, the average CHI value of associated occurrences whilst someone is missing or absent is 8.4 (min = 0, max = 548, sd. = 8.4, n = 211). This value is more harm than an affray, but less than an assault occasioning actual bodily harm. Males had an average CHI value of 9.4 compared to 6.8 for females; again, this difference was not significant. The average CHI value for someone 14 or under was zero, compared to 17.1 for 15 to 17 year olds, 1.5 for 18 to 25, 0.7 for 26 to 64 and zero for 65 or over. Theses differences were not significant, until comparing 15 to 17 year olds with all other groups ($t(96) = 2.15$, $p = 0.034$, $n = 211$).

People from local authority care were significantly more likely to have a higher average CHI value ($f(2) = 8.55$, $p = 0.000$, $n = 4445$), with an average value of 2.6, compared to 0.2 and 0.9 for individuals from hospital and those not from local authority care.

There was no significant relationship was found between the length of time someone was missing and whether there was an associated crime occurrence whilst they were missing ($t(43.37) = 1.5$, $p = 0.14$, $n = 4,861$). Similarly, no significant relationship was found between the length of time someone was missing and the

average CHI value for the individual ($r = -0.01$, $p = 0.67$, $n = 4,861$). Given the low base rates, a significant relationship was not expected.

The 'Safe and Well' interview, completed once someone has been located, is designed to ensure that the missing person has not come to any harm or been involved in any crime whilst they have been missing. The information is shared with partners to help safeguard those deemed most vulnerable, particularly those susceptible to CSE. In attempting to assess the effectiveness of the 'Safe and Well' interview, the data shows a significant positive relationship between the average word count of the interview with the average CHI value. That is to say, the more officers are able to engage with the missing person by gathering as much information as possible in the return interview, the more likely they are to identify those who experience harm ($r = 0.04$, $p = 0.007$, $n = 5,115$). It is understood that the assumption is made that the higher the word count, the greater the quality of the return interview. This assumption may not always hold true. In terms of the word count of the 'Safe and Well' interview and the number of times someone has been reported missing, no significant relationship was found ($r = -0.01$, $p = 0.43$, $n = 5,115$).

Finally, there is a positive significant relationship between the number of times someone is reported missing with their average CHI value ($r = 0.08$, $p = 0.000$, $n = 5115$). This is also true for absent cases, where the more times someone is reported missing, the higher their average CHI value ($r = 0.3$, $p= 0.000$, $n = 869$).

How accurate is the current risk assessment scheme at measuring crime harm?

The study recognises that it is difficult to assess what effect police involvement actually has without a randomised control experiment, since their intervention may reduce the harm missing persons might otherwise have come to. However, the data collected provides some useful insights. First: there are individuals who returned of their own accord; secondly, children who are assessed as low-risk contrary to policy and finally, children who were incorrectly dealt with as absent rather missing.

Return of Own Accord

Currently, whether or not someone returns of his or her own accord prior to police locating the individual is not routinely recorded. As a result, the 'Safe and Well' return interview notes were searched for the words "return of own accord". It is important to note that 'Safe and Well' checks are only completed for missing individuals. Doing so showed that 735 (14%) of missing people returned by themselves. There could be much more than this. Younger people are more likely to return of their own accord ($t(1177) = -7.01$, $p = 0.000$, $n = 5051$). The mean age of someone who returns of their own accord is 22, compared to 26 for someone who does not. Missing children were more likely than missing adults to return of their own accord (Chi-square = 52.46, $p = 0.000$, $n = 5051$, Cramer's $v = 0.10$), with 9% of missing children returning of their own accord, compared to 5% for missing adults.

An equal percentage of males and females returned of their own accord. When missing people are found within an hour, they are more likely to have done so

because they returned of their own accord rather than being located by other means (Chi-square = 26.82, p = 0.000, n = 4819, Cramer's v = 0.08). 26% of those who return of their own accord do so within the hour, compared 19% who did not return of their own accord. Medium-risk missing people as classified by the police are more likely than low-risk missing people to return of their own accord (Chi-square = 31.93, p = 0.000, n = 4945, Cramer's v = 0.08), where 16% of medium-risk missing people returned of their own accord, compared to 13% of low-risk and 9% of high-risk.

When adult and children missing cases were analysed separately, low-risk missing children were more likely to return of their own accord than medium or high-risk (Chi-square = 14.92, p = 0.001, n = 2735, Cramer's v = 0.07). 21% of low-risk missing children returned of their own accord, compared to 18% and 11% for medium and high-risk respectively.

For each missing individual, the average CHI value of all associated occurrences was obtained for that individual. There was no significant relationship between the harm someone experiences (average CHI) and whether or not they return of their own accord (t (5113) = 0.85, p = 0.39, n = 5,115). Absent people were not included in this analysis as there is little to no police intervention in those cases. The average CHI value for someone who returns of their own accord is 1.3 compared to 1.0 for someone who does not return by themselves, with the approximate level of harm for the relative offences being less than a shoplifting (1.5 CHI) and theft from motor vehicle (1 CHI). This suggests that even had the relationship been significant, police actions have little effect on the harm experienced by missing people.

Low-Risk Missing Children

Policy dictates that children are not to be graded as low-risk. As described earlier, individuals assessed as low-risk by police have minimal police intervention apart from basic enquiries. Analysing this data would indicate the harm experienced by low-risk missing children when police respond proportionately based on the information available to them at the time. Again, risk grading can be amended upwards or downwards as new information comes to light. In the six-month period, 3% (78) of missing children cases was graded as low with 21% of those returning of their own accord. These 78 cases relate to 75 different children, but only three individuals were known to have been involved in crime whilst they go missing. The results show that low-risk missing children were likely to have the lowest average CHI ($f(2) = 5.87$, $p = 0.003$, $n = 2,735$), with the average for low, medium and high being 0.9, 1.4 and 3.3 respectively. It could be that police are grading correctly and strengthens the argument for changing the policy to allow the use of low-risk grading for children. These individuals will be referred to as MC1 to MC3 and they have all been in local authority care. No child who had been reported missing regardless of risk was subsequently found deceased in the dataset.

Table 8: Low-Risk Missing Children Information

Missing Person	Brief Information
MP1	From Local Authority Care
	16 Years Old
	White Ethnicity
	Male
	Missing 37 Times
	Absent Twice
	Low Risk Once
	Medium Risk 34 Times
	High Risk Twice
	Six Associated Crime Occurrences Created Whilst Missing or Absent
	Recorded as a Suspect for all Associated Occurrences
	Occurrences: Two Counts of Theft from Person, Robbery, Theft of Pedal Cycle and Two Counts of Criminal Damage
	Missing for an Average of 18 Hours
MP2	From Local Authority Care
	17 Years Old
	White Ethnicity
	Male
	Missing Five Times
	Absent Twice
	Low Risk Twice
	Medium Risk Three Times
	Two Associated Crime Occurrences Created Whilst Missing or Absent
	Recorded as a Suspect for all Associated Occurrences
	Occurrences: Arson and Criminal Damage
	Missing for an Average of 36 Hours
MP3	From Local Authority Care
	15 Years Old
	White Ethnicity
	Male
	Missing 17 Times
	Absent Five Times
	Low Risk Once
	Medium Risk 15 Times
	High Risk Once
	Two Associated Crime Occurrences Created Whilst Missing or Absent
	Recorded as a Suspect for all Associated Occurrences
	Occurrences: Criminal Damage and Theft of Motor Vehicle
	Missing for an Average of 12 Hours

Absent Children

There were 355 absent occurrences that relate to children, which as is against policy as children should not be treated as absent or low-risk missing. They therefore indicate the harm that children experience when there is no police response. Absent

children are likely to have a lower average CHI value than missing children (t (2288) = 4.32, p = 0.000, n = 3093), with the average for absent being 0.6, compared to 1.7 for missing. These 355 cases relate to 199 different children with seven of these individuals known to have been involved in crime whilst they go missing or absent. These individuals will be referred to as AC1 to AC7. It should be noted that AC1 and MC1 is the same person, likewise, AC2 and MC2 and AC3 and MC3. This leaves AC4 to AC7. In 95% of the cases, these absent children return within 48 hours, of which 89% return within 24 hours and 8% within an hour. No absent child was subsequently found deceased in the dataset. AC1 to AC7 were all from Local Authority Care.

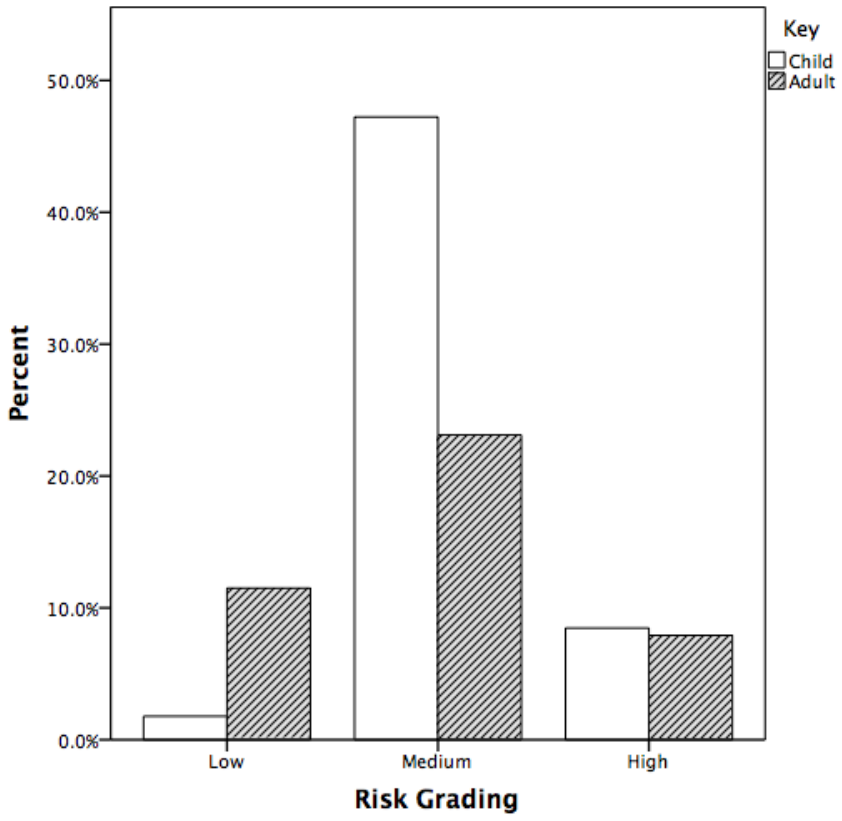
Table 9: Absent Children Information

Absent Person	Information
AC4	From Local Authority Care
	15 Years Old
	White Ethnicity
	Male
	Missing 16 Times
	Absent Twice
	Medium Risk on all occasisions missing
	One Associated Crime Occurrences Created Whilst Missing or Absent
	Recorded as a Victim for the one Associated Occurrence
	Occurrence: Take, Make or Publish Indecent Images of Children
	Missing for an Average of 13 Hours
AC5	From Local Authority Care
	17 Years Old
	Black Ethnicity
	Male
	Missing Nine Times
	Absent Eight Times
	Medium Risk on all occasisions missing
	One Associated Crime Occurrences Created Whilst Missing or Absent
	Recorded as a Suspect for the one Associated Occurrence
	Occurrence: Shoplifting
	Missing for an Average of 12 Hours
AC6	From Local Authority Care
	17 Years Old
	White Ethnicity
	Female
	Missing 14 Times
	Absent Once
	Medium Risk on all occasisions missing
	One Associated Crime Occurrences Created Whilst Missing or Absent
	Recorded as a Witness for the one Associated Occurrence
	Occurrence: Assault Occasioning Actual Bodily Harm
	Missing for an Average of 17 Hours
AC7	From Local Authority Care
	15 Years Old
	White Ethnicity
	Male
	Missing 11 Times
	Absent Once
	Medium Risk on all occasisions missing
	One Associated Crime Occurrences Created Whilst Missing or Absent
	Recorded as a Suspect for the one Associated Occurrence
	Occurrence: Theft
	Missing for an Average of 15 Hours

Current Risk Assessment Scheme

The purpose of this section is to critically evaluate the way TVP currently grade missing people by comparing it with the actual harm them experience. There are 4,945 missing person cases with a risk grading: 13% of missing cases were graded as low-risk; 68% medium and 16% high. Children were slightly more likely to be graded as high-risk than adults (Chi-square = 658.18, p = 0.000, n = 4889, Cramer's v = 0.07), with 52% of high-risk cases relate to children, compared to 48% for adults. Once the ages were grouped, children under 14 were the most likely age group to be graded as high-risk (Chi-square = 927.84, p = 0.000, n = 4889, Cramer's v = 0.31), accounting for 31% of all high-risk cases.

Table 10: Police Missing Persons Risk Gradings Child and Adult Comparison



High-risk missing people are likely to be found much sooner than low-risk, but not as quickly as medium-risk (f (2) = 4.96, p = 0.007, n = 3842), where the mean length of time in hours to locate a missing person from the time they were reported being 210, 57 and 64 hours for low, medium and high-risk respectively. There were 30 missing incidents where it took over 1000 hours to locate someone. Once these extreme values were excluded from the analysis, missing people were found sooner the higher their risk grading (f (2) = 38.83, p = 0.000, n = 3,812), with the mean length of time in hours to locate a missing person from the time they were reported being 36, 14 and 13 hours for low, medium and high-risk respectively.

High-risk missing people are no more likely than low-risk missing people to be involved in crime as a victim or suspect whilst they are missing (Chi-square = 51.42, p = 0.000, n = 4945, Cramer's v = 0.10), with both high and low-risk each accounting 0.3% of the total missing reports where the individual has been linked to an associated crime occurrence that occurred whilst missing. In other words, 98.4% of high-risk missing cases has individuals who are not involved in any crime whilst they go missing, be it as a victim or suspect. However, the higher the risk grading of a missing person, the more likely they are to have a higher average CHI value (f (2) = 4.25, p = 0.014, n = 4945), with an average CHI value of 0.6, 1.0 and 1.8 for low, medium and high respectively.

At the back of nearly every police officer's mind when dealing with missing people is the possibility of the person being found dead. There were 11 people

classed as deceased in the dataset and they were all classed as missing. These individuals will be briefly described and referred to as MD1 to MD11.

Table 11: Deceased Missing People

Deceased Person	Information
MD1	52 Years Old
	White Ethnicity
	Male
	Had not been reported missing before in the previous six months
	Graded High Risk
	Found alive after three hours of police searching
	Died over two weeks after being found alive
MD2	25 Years Old
	Asian Ethnicity
	Male
	Had not been reported missing before in the previous six months
	Graded Low Risk
	Found deceased after five days of police searching
	He died whilst he was missing and an unexplained death occurrence was created
MD3	50 Years Old
	White Ethnicity
	Male
	Had not been reported missing before in the previous six months
	Graded High Risk
	Found deceased after eight hours of police searching
	He died before the missing report was made to the police and an unexplained death occurrence was created
MD4	61 Years Old
	White Ethnicity
	Male
	Had not been reported missing before in the previous six months
	Graded High Risk
	Found deceased after four hours of police searching
	He died before the missing report was made to the police and an unexplained death occurrence was created
MD5	21 Years Old
	Unknown Ethnicity
	Female
	Reported missing twice in the previous six months
	Graded Low Risk on both occassions
	Found alive on both both occassions
	No unexplained death occurrence was created within the dataset so it is possible that she was classifed as deceased due to human error

MD6	49 Years Old
	Black Ethnicity
	Male
	Had not been reported missing before in the previous six months
	Graded High Risk
	Found deceased an hour after police searching
	No unexplained death occurrence was created from within the dataset and the male was located already deceased by officers, likely to have occurred whilst the male was missing.
MD7	45 Years Old
	White Ethnicity
	Female
	Had not been reported missing before in the previous six months
	Graded High Risk
	Found deceased after half an hour of police searching
	She died before the missing report was made to the police and an unexplained death occurrence was created
MD8	42 Years Old
	White Ethnicity
	Male
	Had not been reported missing before in the previous six months
	Graded High Risk
	Found alive after 18 hours of police searching
	He died before the missing report was made to the police and an unexplained death occurrence was created
MD9	22 Years Old
	White Ethnicity
	Male
	Had not been reported missing before in the previous six months
	Graded Low Risk
	Found alive after four hours of police searching
	He died over a month after the initial missing report and an unexplained death occurrence was created
MD10	32 Years Old
	White Ethnicity
	Male
	Had not been reported missing before in the previous six months
	Graded Low Risk
	Found alive after half an hour of police searching
	He died over four months after the initial missing report and an unexplained death occurrence was created
MD11	23 Years Old
	Black Ethnicity
	Male
	Had not been reported missing before in the previous six months
	Graded Low Risk
	Found alive after 14 hours of police searching
	He died following a murder over six months after the initial missing report and a murder occurrence was created

As mentioned earlier, there are 3,706 different individuals who were reported missing or absent in the dataset. From above, two are believed to have died during

the period of time they were reported missing; four died some time after being found alive by officers and four were likely to have died before the report of missing was made to the police. Of the two who died during the period of time missing, one was graded as low-risk and the other high-risk. This shows that only 0.05% of individuals died whilst missing. Excluding MD5, which is likely to be human error, all those who have died had not been reported missing before. Furthermore, no one classed as absent died and no child died.

If a missing or absent person is involved in a crime (victim or suspect) whilst they are missing, they are more likely to be involved in other crimes three months after they are found (Chi-square = 19.48, p = 0.000, n = 9002, Cramer's v = 0.05). 46% of those who were involved in a crime whilst missing went on to be involved in other crimes within three months of being found compared to 22% of those who were not involved in a crime whilst missing.

If the answer is yes to one of the questions from on Risk Assessment 1, then the person must be treated as missing. These seven questions will now be examined. The table below indicates that for most questions, an affirmative response related to a lower risk of harm whether as a victim or as a suspect.

Table 12: Risk Assessment One Results Summary

Question	Information
3	Significantly Out of Character: 0.8% of missing cases where the answer was yes had an individual who was involved in a crime either as a suspect or victim whilst they were missing compared to 4% when the answer is no (Chi-square = 100.19, p = 0.000, n = 5115, Cramer's v = 0.14).
4	Medical Attention or Medicine: 0.3% of missing cases where the answer was yes had an individual who was involved in a crime either as a suspect or victim whilst they were missing compared to 5% when the answer is no (Chi-square = 44.57, p = 0.000, n = 5115, Cramer's v = 0.09).
5	Child Abuse: 2.8% of missing cases where the answer was yes had an individual who was involved in a crime either as a suspect or victim whilst they were missing compared to 2.1% when the answer is no (Chi-square = 199.96, p = 0.000, n = 5115, Cramer's v = 0.2).
6	Subject to Other Crime: 2.3% of missing cases where the answer was yes had an individual who was involved in a crime either as a suspect or victim whilst they were missing compared to 2.6% when the answer is no (Chi-square = 100.46, p = 0.000, n = 5115, Cramer's v = 0.14).
7	Victim of Other Abuse: 1.6% of missing cases where the answer was yes had an individual who was involved in a crime either as a suspect or victim whilst they were missing compared to 3.3% when the answer is no. (Chi-square = 34.24, p = 0.000, n = 5115, Cramer's v = 0.08).
8	Attempt Suicide: 1.3% of missing cases where the answer was yes had an individual who was involved in a crime either as a suspect or victim whilst they were missing compared to 3.6% when the answer is no. The difference was not significant.
9	Danger to Others: 2.2% of missing cases where the answer was yes had an individual who was involved in a crime either as a suspect or victim whilst they were missing compared to 2.6% when the answer is no. (Chi-square = 152.27, p = 0.000, n = 5115, Cramer's v = 0.17).
10	Any Other Information: 2.2% of missing cases where the answer was yes had an individual who was involved in a crime either as a suspect or victim whilst they were missing compared to 2.6% when the answer is no. (Chi-square = 6.23, p = 0.044, n = 5115, Cramer's v = 0.04).

There were 409 missing person reports where the answers to question 3 to 10 were all 'no'. 301 of these were children and 103 were adults (5 reports had age missing). These relate to 337 different individuals, only eight (2%) ever had an associated crime occurrence created during a period when they were missing. It is unclear why these adults were treated as missing and may represent cases where police resources had been wasted unnecessarily.

As described above, the risk assessment process is split into two stages before concluding with a return interview. Risk assessment one is completed by the call-taker. Risk assessment two is completed by the attending police officer. Finally, once someone has been located, the 'Safe and Well' return interview is completed to assess harm and identify ways to prevent them going missing again. Each of these stages will now be briefly examined in terms of the average word count before concluding with an analysis of the number of 'yes' responses in risk assessment one and two.

The average word count for Risk Assessment 1 is 81 (min = 0, max = 598, sd. = 52, n = 4945). Analysing the word count would provide some insight into how much information officers gather to determine the risk level of missing person, as well as providing an indication on if they base such judgement on intuition. High-risk cases are likely to have a slightly lower average word count ($f(2) = 7.03$, $p = 0.001$, $n = 4945$), with the mean word count for low, medium and high being 82, 83 and 81. No significant relationship was found between the word count and the length time it takes to find someone. There is a significant positive relationship between the average word count and the average CHI value for that person ($r = 0.06$, $p = 0.000$, $n = 5115$).

The average word count for Risk Assessment 2 is 28 (min = 0, max = 262, sd. = 25, n = 4945). The average word count is likely to be higher the higher the risk grading ($f(2) = 48.31$, $p = 0.000$, $n = 4945$), with the mean word count for low, medium and high being 19, 29 and 30 respectively. The average word counts for Risk Assessment 1

is significantly lower than Risk Assessment 2 (r = 0.22, p = 0.000, n = 5115). No significant relationship was found between the word count and the length time it takes to find someone. There is a significant positive relationship between the average word count and the average CHI value for that person (r = 0.03, p = 0.035, n = 5115).

The average word count for the 'Safe and Well' interview is 97 (min = 0, max = 1062, sd. = 89, n = 4945). The average word count is likely to be higher the higher the risk grading (f (2) = 33.44, p = 0.000, n = 4945), with the mean word count for low, medium and high being 77, 97 and 115 respectively. There is no significant relationship between the average word count of the 'Safe and Well' interview and the number of times someone is missing. However, there is a significant positive relationship between the average word count of the 'Safe and Well' interview and the average CHI value for that person (r = 0.04, p = 0.007, n = 5115).

The average numbers of 'yes' responses in Risk Assessment 1 and 2 is 3.4 (min = 0, max = 12, sd. = 2.28, n = 4945). The average 'yes' response is likely to be slightly higher for high-risk cases (f (2) = 47.4, p = 0.000, n = 4945), with the mean for low, medium and high being 2.6, 3.4 and 3.6 respectively. Missing people with more affirmative responses have a greater chance of having an associated crime occurrence created whilst they were missing (t (5,113) = 3.99, p = 0.000, n = 5,115). When testing the number of yes responses against the average CHI, no significant relationship was found (r = 0.01, p= 0.313, n = 5,115).

What are the estimated costs of missing and absent person investigations?

The following cost calculations are based on summing the total time spent by each officer on initial enquires using the Command and Control data and is based on reports over the six-month period. Accuracy of cost calculations has been improved by taking the average officer experience level based on years of service for each incident. This allowed for the appropriate pay scale to be applied. Furthermore, known overtime relating to missing person enquiries has also been included. These cost estimations exclude civilian staff costs, administration, fuel and other associated costs such as loss of earnings of family and friends, out searching or partner agency costs (ambulance, fire, hospital and social services). In other words, these are the minimum police officer labour costs. Annualised cost estimations have also been provided.

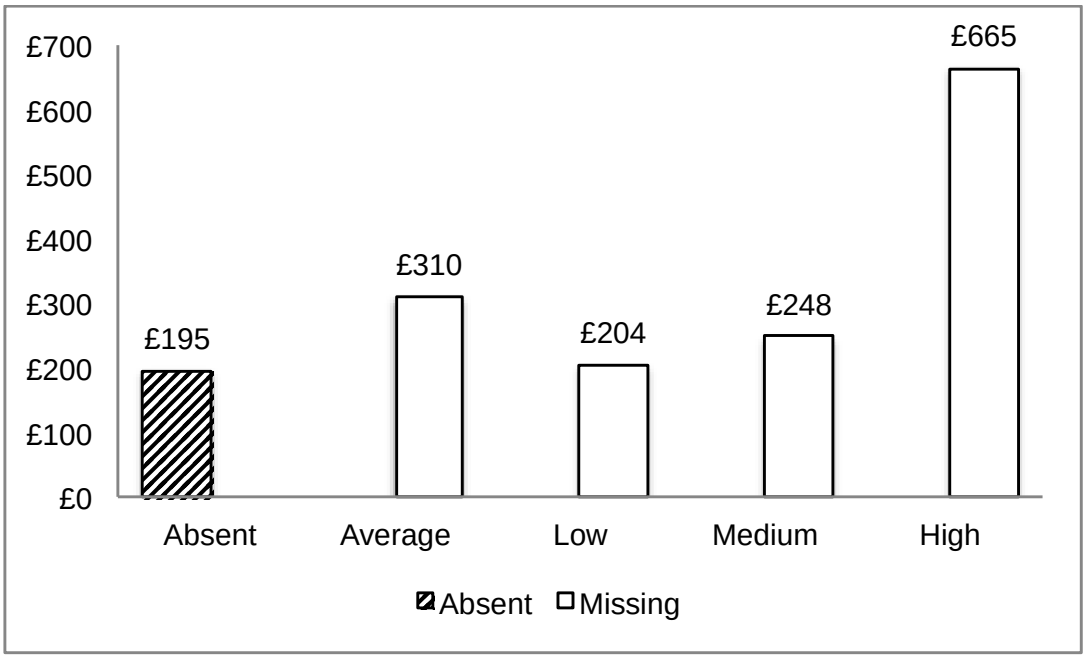
There are 4,670 missing reports to which data is available to calculate costs. Based on these reports, the estimated police officer labour cost of initial enquiries into missing person investigations is estimated to be £1,450,949. The average cost per report is £310. The estimated annual police officer labour cost based on 10,000 missing person reports is £3.1 million. The average cost of initial enquires into a high-risk missing person is £665 compared to £248 and £204 for medium and low-risk respectively. The most costly enquiry was £13,912. This related to a high-risk missing male, aged 21.

The estimated cost to locate a missing person has been calculated by assuming there was at least one officer attached to the enquiry on the lowest pay grade until

the person has been found plus the cost of the initial enquiries. The estimated police officer labour cost to complete missing persons investigation is estimated to be £2,681,417. The average cost per report is £555. The estimated annual cost based on 10,000 missing person reports is £5.55 million. The average cost to complete a high-risk missing person enquiry is £874 compared to £441 and £846 for medium and low-risk respectively. The most costly enquiry was £52, 301. This related to a high-risk missing female, aged 14.

The average time it took an absent person to return from the time of report to police was 15.45 hours. This was based on 835 absent reports with enough data to make the time calculation. The estimated cost is based on the pay rate for a trainee call handler (£24,234) to be allocated to the case since absent reports are managed by the Police Control Room. The estimated cost of absent reports is £162, 831, providing an average of £195 per report. The estimated annual cost based on a conservative 1,500 absent reports is £292,500.

Figure 4: Average Police Labor Costs of Initial Enquires



Discussion

The discussion of the results mirrors the research questions and will be examined in the same order as the laid out in the results section before concluding with recommendations. Discussion in relation to the supplementary findings (Appendix 6) can ben seen in the Appendices, Appendix 7.

What types of missing and absent people experience (suffer and cause) crime harm?

It is understandable that the literature hitherto on missing people and crime involvement, focused on children given their potential vulnerability (Payne 1995). However, large proportions of missing (41%) and absent (45%) people are adults, some of whom may be vulnerable due to other reasons and should not be ignored. Missing males are more likely to be a suspect in a crime, whereas females are more likely to be victims. This is not unusual, given that nationally, the number of arrests for males greatly outweigh females, with males accounting for 85% of arrests (Ministry of Justice 2014).

Of all the associated crime occurrences that occur whilst someone is missing, children and adults account for equal proportions. Furthermore, they are more likely to be recorded as a suspect rather than a victim, indicating that they are more likely to cause harm to others than suffer harm. However, this relates to crime occurrences and it is accepted the difficulty police face quantifying non-crime harm and encouraging those who go missing to report a crime against them. The 'Safe and Well'

interview is an attempt to encourage this reporting and the results indicate that there is a significant and positive relationship between the average word count of the interview with the average CHI value. That is to say, the more officers are able to engage with the missing person by gathering as much information as possible in the return interview, the more likely they are to identify those who experience harm. It would appear that the 'Safe and Well' interview is a step in the right direction in encouraging engagement, but further research is required to understand its full impact. The results also show that children were more likely than adults to be involved in sexual offences but the top five specific crime types were: 1) common assault, 2) assault occasioning actual bodily harm, 3) shoplifting, 4) criminal damage and 5) theft other. This corroborates previous research by Shalev (2011) who examined offending history of missing children and found that shoplifting and theft, assaults and criminal damage were the most common offences. The average CHI value of associated occurrences created whilst someone is missing (8.4) was higher than the three months prior to the missing report (1.4) and three months after being found (1.0).

In terms of non-crime harm, females and older missing people are more likely to have an associated mental health occurrence. This observation is also true for domestic non-recordable and adult protection occurrences. This shows that although children are generally viewed as more vulnerable, adults are also vulnerable for varying reasons, particularly females. This is also seen for children where girls are more likely than boys to have a children protection occurrence. It is important to note that only 2% of individuals were identified as having experienced some form of

recorded harm. When the crime harm index was applied, whilst also taking into account missing and absent people suffering from mental health, males on average were associated with more harm whilst missing than females, 9.4 and 6.8 respectively. This shows that although females were more likely to be victims of crimes, when harm was combined (crime and non-crime), the harm caused by males as suspects outweigh this. Once age was considered, children aged 15 to 17 were by far associated with the greatest level of harm at 17.1 whilst missing. This compares to zero for those under 14 years old and those 65 or over. It was 1.5 for 18 to 25 and 0.7 for 26 to 64. However, these results were not significant. When examining harm during the period before someone is missing and after someone is found, children were significantly more likely than adults to experience harm either as a victim or suspect. Police intervention to prevent harm prior to someone going missing is difficult. However, there appears to be scope for harm prevention after someone has been found.

People from local authority care were significantly more likely to have a higher average CHI value ($p = 0.000$) than those who are not and that they tend to be perpetrators rather sufferers of harm. This is based on crime occurrences and as an important reminder, it is based on reports made to police; the levels of harm experienced that go unreported is not known. This is in contradiction to the finding by Shalev (2011) who found no statistical correlation between place of residence and number of arrests. However, this could be due to the variable being measured. Shalev (2011) looked at the number of arrests, which purely looks at the harm caused to others. The CHI value calculated in this study also takes into account occasions when they are victims and also when there is a mental health incident, which is a more

accurate indication of harm compared to research up to now. The results lend some support to the finding by Hayden (2010) in that residential care home environments can reinforce offending behaviour, not withstanding the limitation of this view discussed in the literature review.

Interestingly, there is a very significant positive relationship ($p = 0.000$) between the number of times someone is reported missing or absent and their average CHI value; i.e. the more someone goes missing or absent, the level of recorded harm they experience increases. Furthermore, the higher the risk grading of a missing person, the more likely they are to have a higher average, with an average CHI value of 0.6, 1.0 and 1.8 for low, medium and high respectively. This evidences the importance of preventing people from going missing and lends to the view that missing should not be treated as an event in itself but as indicators to other issues. However, the likelihood of harm is extremely low as summarised below. In addition, depending on the absolute levels of harm, the numbers of prior missing events could be used to assist officers in assessing the risk level.

How accurate is the current risk assessment scheme at measuring crime harm?

Arguably, the most important aspect of the research in terms of resource allocation is attempting to answer this specific question, since this influences police actions and resourcing. The key finding is 99% of those reported missing or absent do not come to any crime harm. Even once non-crime harm is taken into account, this percentage only drops by one. The results in terms of people who return of their own accord, low-

risk missing children and absent children show that there appears to be evidence for missing people to be managed differently. With police resources under ever-increasing pressure, it would be advantageous to profile individuals who show the least likelihood of experiencing or causing harm. However, it is recognised that given the context in which policing currently operates, it is extremely difficult for police to discriminate against certain individuals, particularly children, and choose not to investigate these missing reports. Further research is required to build a firm evidence base if policy is to change. The role of care home and hospital staff also needs to be investigated, particularly preventing individuals in their care from going missing and if they go missing, the enquiries they must carry out as part of sharing the responsibility of locating them with the police.

Having said that, when someone is reported as missing, the fear amongst officers and most people is that they individual may have died. However, the study suggests that the likelihood of this happening is extremely low, with only two individuals identified out of 3,706 (0.05%). This is in line with Ayers and Bird (1932) who found that only 150 out of 250,000 reports (0.06%) resulted in a suicide. On both occasions in the present study, these two individuals had not been reported missing before and in fact, one was graded as low-risk. This supports research by Smith and Greene (2014) who felt that the current risk assessment scheme was often subjective and inconsistent. Such low bases rates make predicting such events extremely difficult, which may explain why there are disproportionately so many high and medium-risk cases (see Kemshall, 2010; Tarling and Burrows, 2004). The likelihood of someone experiencing crime harm (suspect or victim) whilst they are missing is also

low; with only 1.1% of individuals and 0.9% of missing incidents have an associated crime occurrence. The likelihood of someone recorded as a suspect in an associated crime occurrence whilst they are missing is 0.7% and even lower as a victim, 0.4%. Even with non-crime occurrences included, only 213 associated occurrences were created whilst someone was missing or absent, based on the 3,706 individuals or 5,984 missing or absent reports. Taken together, the results show that it is very unlikely for someone to experience harm whilst they are missing. Officers and supervisors may take the view "let's be safe than sorry". Unfortunately, such a mindset cannot continue due to limited resources and competing pressures to prioritise these resources in other areas like historic sexual offences, child abuse, domestic violence, cybercrime and counter terrorism.

When each of the questions in Risk Assessment 1 was examined in turn, the results would appear to indicate that the risk assessment was very poor at predicting crime harm. These are the screening questions the call taker would use to determine whether someone should be missing or absent. Although there is a significant relationship between the number of 'yes' responses in the risk assessment and the final risk grading, indicating that officers may be using the risk assessment to aid in the decision making on the grading, there is no statistically significant relation between the numbers of yes and the average CHI value.

Of note is the average word count for Risk Assessment 2 is only 28. There is a significant difference between the mean word counts for the three risk gradings, with a one-word difference between medium and high. It is hard to imagine how an officer

can make a judgement between the two risk gradings based on an average of just one word difference. Overall, a word count of 28 is extremely low for what is the main method police use to risk assess. It is significantly lower than the initial risk assessment completed by the call taker. The document is the main source of information officers use to gather information about the individual. It may be that the people who report those as missing do not have sufficient information to provide police. However, it is also possible that some officers still treat this as a paper exercise without believing it has a real meaning or purpose. There may be some who still believe that missing people should not be the responsibility of the police. Although the results would seem to indicate that the risk assessment scheme is not accurate, police should make use of all opportunity to gather information effectively and sufficiently, if only to help improve the process or at the very least share information with partner agencies and work towards preventing the vulnerable from going missing in the first place.

The police service cannot eliminate harm to missing and absent people completely. A decision needs to be made in terms of prioritising resources. With the upward trajectory of missing and absent person reports and a falling budget, police officers face a dilemma. Results clearly indicate that the risk of serious harm is extremely low. The worst-case scenario is for the policy to change whereby a child is reported missing but police dealt with it as an absent or low-risk, only to discover that the child died and it could have been prevented if officers allocated resources to look for the child. The fallout as a result of such a case cannot be under-estimated. However, policing policy and decisions should not be based on a worst-case scenario

but securely planted on evidence-based foundations. The evidence in this study suggests that such a scenario is highly unlikely but further research is required. Although in a domestic violence context, the "hindsight fallacy" (Sherman 1992) equally applied to missing person investigations. Some factors may apply retrospectively to individuals who have been harmed or caused harm whilst missing; these same factors may also apply to cases of no harm relative to the absence of those factors (Thornton, 2011).

What are the estimated costs of missing and absent person investigations?

There is no doubt about it. Missing persons investigations, if not already, are quickly becoming one of the core areas of policing. UK policing is already among the most expensive in the developed world, higher than the USA, Canada, New Zealand and Australia (Boyd et al. 2011). The results indicate that the estimated average cost of the initial enquiries in terms of police labour into a high-risk missing person investigation was significantly greater than low and medium-risk. High-risk costing £665 compared to £248 and £204 for medium and low-risk respectively. Once calculations were made for costs to conclude the investigation, the difference between high-risk (£874 per report) and medium-risk (£441 per report) was lower. Interestingly, this difference drastically reduced, with low-risk cases estimated to cost £846 per report. It is suspected that this is due to high-risk missing people being found sooner, due to other resources being employed but not captured in the cost calculations: resources such as use of helicopter searches, cell site mobile phone analysis and specialist search teams. Whereas, for low-risk cases these are just

monitored by an officer or supervisor on a daily basis and only basic enquiries are completed resulting in these individuals taking much longer to locate. It is recognised that the cost estimates in the study are significantly less than Greene and Pakes (2013a) who found that it was £2,415.80 for each medium-risk and medium term missing person. However, their estimates included other costs on top of officer labour costs and suffer from methodological limitations discussed earlier. In terms of the police labour costs of the initial police enquiries, this thesis is the first attempt to accurately make such calculations. Even without the other costs included, with an estimated minimum annual labour cost of initial enquiries for TVP of between £3.1 and £5.5 million, further research into missing persons would pay dividend to improving the way police manage such investigations. To date, there appears to be no estimate on absent people.

The results estimates the average cost of each absent report being £195, which puts the annual cost to TVP at £292,500. The results indicate that there could be significant savings without increasing risk of harm if some missing people are categorised as absent. It would appear that TVP are not fully utilising the new absent category, preferring the more risk adverse approach of categorising people as missing. However, the study has not been able to create an accurate profile of individuals who would definitely not suffer any harm. There are inherent problems in trying to predict events with low base rates. If anything, the results reinforce the view that missing people are complex and further research is needed.

Recommendations

Officers need to have the courage and be encouraged to use the National Decision Model (NDM) together with the ACPO Risk Principles (see College of Policing) to aid them in dealing with missing and absent cases in a proportionate manner and less risk adverse manner. Based on the results and the process of completing the study, the final part of this chapter makes some recommendations, which is summarised in the table below. A detailed discussion of the recommendations can be seen in Appendices, Appendix 8.

Table 13: Table Summarising the Recommendations

No.	Recommendations
1	Harm to be recorded more accurately by improving Niche.
2	All sudden deaths recorded on Niche.
3	All persons detained under s136 of the Mental Health Act needs to be recorded on Niche.
4	Accurate recording of those who return of their own accord.
5	Introduction of 'Misper Checks' similar to 'DASH Checks'.
6	Replace the term 'low risk' with 'standard risk'.
7	16 or 17 year old children in some circumstances can be graded as low or standard risk.
8	Further training in relation to the completion of the risk assessment.
9	Carehome staff to have further training to improve knowledge of the children they look after and the risk assessment process.
10	School Liaison Officers to have a greater role in managing missing children and gathering intelligence.
11	Risk Management Occurrence to be used for certain missing individuals to improve the flow of information to assist officers and partner agencies.
12	Continue developing projects such as Barndado's "R U Safe' and working with partners to encourage missing people to report harm.
13	Information about missing people to be shared across bordering LPA's in daily officer briefings.
14	Ammendmant to the GEN35 to obtain explicit consent for police to share limited information such as description and photograph with shops and businesses.
15	Clearer policy in relation to missing people who are also wanted for an offence.
16	Clearer policy in relation to circumstances when fear for welfare individuals are to be treated as missing.
17	Improvement to police ovetime system to incoroprate Missing Persons category.
18	Changes to Niche to improve accuracy of missing locations.

Conclusion

Missing children have not traditionally been thought of as a core area of policing. However there has been a clear shift away from this viewpoint. Preventing crime and disorder may be at the heart of policing, but the role of constable is much broader than that. Individuals and communities tend to turn to the police for help when they feel no one else could help. Families, friends and carers of those missing are such groups who turn to the police in desperate times to find their loved ones. It is beyond the scope the thesis to question whether policing should continue to shoulder the lion's share of the responsibility in preventing and locating missing people. As the literature review and results highlights, missing people is a complex phenomenon. The people who go missing may have a combination of underlying issues, so an approach similar to domestic violence may be needed; one that that is forward-looking, intelligence led and involves multi-agency problem solving (Thornton 2011).

The Bullfinch Trial was a tipping point for TVP in terms of how missing persons are dealt with, but it is feared that the balance has swung too far where resources are directed away from other core areas of policing unnecessarily. The resources directed towards missing person enquiries should be based on information available to the police at the time, with continual review and reassessment. Working towards a worse case scenario or grading someone at a higher risk than the information would suggest may put other people's lives at risk due to delays in attending other calls for service. It is felt that the current policy of treating all children as a medium-risk missing person or higher regardless of the circumstances and likelihood of harm is risk adverse and not

an effective use of limited resources. As the results indicate, the likelihood of someone being harmed or causing harm to others is low, with 99% of people not suffering any crime harm and 98% not suffering any type of recorded harm. Though harm levels were higher whilst someone was missing compared to three months prior or three months after. In terms of the most serious harm, that of death, only two out of the 3,706 (0.05%) of the missing or absent individuals were identified as having died whilst they were missing. Consequently, low-risk gradings appears to be under utilised and there may be occasions when children can be treated as low-risk, where basic enquiries are still completed and the risk is kept under review. The option to increase the risk with passage of time or further information coming to light remains open. For the same reasons outlined above, it is believed that a larger proportion of adults could be graded as absent or low-risk.

Officers must be careful not to fall back into treating missing people as an event in itself, believing that someone who is repeatedly missing will always be found unharmed. The study has showed that there is a very significant positive relationship between the number of times someone goes missing to the average harm associated with that person (both as victim and suspect). This leads to the point mentioned throughout the study, that the missing person definition concerns both harm to the missing individual and the harm to others. It seems that much focus has been on the former. A significantly large proportion of people who are reported as missing or absent, who have an associated occurrence, are recorded as a suspect: 39% for all occurrences and 63% for crime only occurrences.

Similar to DASH, the missing persons risk assessment was introduced without any form of effective evaluation or evidence base. It is an example of System 1 thinking which the police service must start to move away from. It is perhaps therefore not surprising that the results in the present study has put into question the accuracy and reliability of the current risk assessment scheme. It is not suggested at this stage that the scheme be abandoned. On the contrary, it is hoped that this would encourage further research in this area as well as improve the way in which TVP are currently managing missing persons investigations. The recommendations put forward may help in this respect.

The thesis examined missing and absent person cases in TVP to establish: 1) those that experience crime harm; 2) accuracy of the current risk assessment scheme and 3) the costs of missing and absent person investigations. The present study into this emerging core area of policing is the first attempt at addressing some of these key points. It is an area of policing with a minimum annual estimated labour cost of the initial enquiries to TVP between £3.1 and £5.5 for missing persons and £292,500 for absent persons.

It is hoped that the study, at the very least, presents evidence that would ignite further research and help improve how the police currently manage missing and absent person enquiries. Ever since Ayers and Bird published their work in 1932, there has been relatively little research into this area of policing, with more focus being placed on other areas that have traditionally been thought of as a police matter. From a research and public policy perspective, missing people have been an overlooked area

of policing. Missing and absent people is a core area of policing deserving of more focus.

References

Abrahams, C., & Mungall, R. (1992) *'Runaways: Exploding the Myths'*, London: NCH

Alys, L., Massey, K. & Tong, S. (2013) *'Missing People and Sexual Offences, Crossroads to an Uncertain Future'*, Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profile, vol. 10 no. 2, pp. 140-154

ACPO, Association of Chief Police Officers (2002) *'Manual of Guidance for Management of Missing Persons'*, London: ACPO

ACPO, Association of Chief Police Officers (2005) *'Guidance on the Management, Recording, and Investigations of Missing Persons'*, London: ACPO, retrieved 25th March 2015 from:
http://library.college.police.uk/docs/acpo/Missing-Persons-2005-ACPO-Guidance.pdf

Ayers, J. H. & Bird, C. (1932) *'Missing Men: The Story of The Missing Persons Bureau of the New York Police Department'*, New York: Garden City Publishing Company

Bartholomew, D., Duff, D. & Figgins, N. (2009) *'Strategies to Reduce Missing Patients: A Practical Handbook'*, National Mental Health Development Unit, retrieved 25th March 2015 from:
http://www.starwards.org.uk/?wpdmdl=23&ind=5

Biehal, N., Mitchell, F. & Wade, J. (2003) *'Lost from View: Missing Persons in the UK'*, Bristol: The Policy Press

Boyd, E., Geoghegan, R. & Gibbs, B. (2011) *'Cost of Cops: Manpower and Deployment in Policing'*, London: Policy Exchange

COP, College of Policing (2013) *'Interim Guidance on Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons'*, retrieved 20th March 2015 from:
http://library.college.police.uk/docs/college-of-policing/Interim-Missing-Persons-Guidance-2013.pdf

CPS, Crown Prosecution Service (2013) *'Operation Bullfinch'*, retrieved 2nd April 2015 from:
http://www.cps.gov.uk/thames_chiltern/cps_thames_and_chiltern_news/operation_bullfinch_men_sentenced_oxford/

Duncan, G.T., Elliot, M. & Salazar-Gonzalez, J. (2011) *'Statistical Confidentiality: Principles and Practice'*, New York: Springer

FBI, Federal Bureau of Investigation (2013) *'NCIC Missing Person and Unidentified Person Statistics for 2013'*, retrieved 23rd March 2015 from:

http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ncic/ncic-missing-person-and-unidentified-person-statistics-for-2013

Greene, S.K. & Hayden, C. (2014) *'Repeat Reports to the Police of Missing People: Locations and Characteristics'*, University of Portsmouth Centre for the Study of Missing Persons, retrieved 17th March 2015 from: http://www.port.ac.uk/media/contacts-and-departments/icjs/csmp/Repeat-reports-to-the-police-of-missing-people.pdf

Greene, S.K. & Pakes, F. (2013a) *'The cost of Missing Person Investigations: Implications for Current Debates'*, Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice, vol. 8 no. 1, pp. 27-34

Greene, S.K. & Pakes, F. (2013b) *'Absent: An Exploration of Common Police Procedures for Safeguarding Practices in Cases of Missing Children and Adult'*, University of Portsmouth Centre for the Study of Missing Persons, Report submitted to the National Crime Agency, retrieved 17th March 2015 from: http://www.acpo.police.uk/documents/reports/2013/201312-absent-report.pdf

Hayden, C. (2010) *'Offending Behaviour in Care: Is Children's Residential Care a "Crimino-Genic" Environment?'*, Child & Family Social Work, vol. 13 no. 4, pp. 461-72

Hayden, C. & Goodship, J (2013) *'Children Reported 'Missing' to the Police: Is it Possible to 'Risk Assess' Every Incident?'*, British Journal of Social Work, vol. 45 no. 2, pp. 440-456

Hedges, C. (2002) *'Missing You Already: A Guide to the Investigation of Missing Persons'*, London: Home Office

Henderson, M., Henderson, P. & Kiernan, C. (2000) *'Missing Persons: Incidences, Issues and Impacts'*, Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice, no. 144, pp. 1-6

Hirschel, J.D. & Lab, S.P. (1988) *'Who is missing? The Realities of the Missing Persons Problem'*, Journal of Criminal Justice, vol. 16, pp. 35-45

Home Office (1994) *'Responding to Missing Persons: Circular 12/1994'*, London: Home Office

Jacoby, J.E. & Cullen, F.T. (1998) *'The Structure of Punishment Norms: Applying the Rossi-Berk Model'*, Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, vol. 89, pp. 245-312

Kahneman D. (2011) *'Thinking Fast and Slow'*, London: Penguin Books

Kemshall, H. (2010) *'Risk Rationalities in Contemporary Social Work Policy and Practice'*, British Journal of Social Work, vol. 40 no. 4, pp. 1247-62

NCA, National Crime Agency (2014) *'Missing Persons: Data and Analysis 2012/2013'*, retrieved 17th March 2015 from:
http://missingpersons.police.uk/download/48

Mervyn, P. (2004) *'Young Runaways in Greater Merseyside'*, London: The Children's Society

Ministry of Justice (2014) *'Statistics on Women and the Criminal Justice System 2013'*, retrieved 21st October 2015 from:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/380090/women-cjs-2013.pdf

Newiss, G. (1999) *'Missing presumed . . .? The Police Response to Missing Persons (Police Research Series Paper 114)'*, London: Home Office

Newiss, G. (2004) *'Estimating the Risk Faced by Missing Persons: A Study of Homicide Victims as an Example of an Outcome Based Approach'*, International Journal of Police Science and Management, vol. 6 no. 1, pp. 27-36

NHS (2012) *'Thames Valley Local Education and Training Board – Profile'*, retrieved 21st October 2015 from:
http://www.workforce.southcentral.nhs.uk/pdf/Thames%20Valley_profile.pdf

NPIA, National Policing Improvement Agency (2010) *'Guidance on Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons'*, retrieved 20th March 2015 from:
http://library.college.police.uk/docs/npia/missing-persons-guidance-2010.pdf

NPIA, National Policing Improvement Agency (2012) *'Missing Persons: Data and Analysis 2010/2011'*, retrieved 17th March 2015 from:
http://www.missingpersons.police.uk/download/24

NSPCC, National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (n.d.) *'NSPCC Response to All Party Parliamentary Group on Runaway and Missing Children and Adults'*, retrieved 26th March 2015 from:
http://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/consultation-responses/nspcc-response-missing-children-inquiry.pdf

Parr, H. & Fyfe, N. (2012) *'Missing Geographies'*, Progress in Human Geography, vol. 37 no. 5, pp. 615-638

Parr, H. & Stevenson, O (2013) *'Missing People, Missing Voices: Stories of Missing Experience'*, Economic and Social Research Council, retrieved 25th March 2015 from:
http://www.geographiesofmissingpeople.org.uk/downloads/missingvoices.pdf

Payne, M. (1995) *'Understanding 'Going Missing': Issues for Social Work and Social Services'*, British Journal for Social Work, vol. 25, pp. 333-348

Rees, G. (2001) *'Working with Young Runaways: Learning from Practice*', London Press

Sellin, T., & Wolfgang, M. E. (1964) *'The Measurement of Delinquency'*, Oxford: Wiley

Sentencing Guidelines Council (2008, updated 2014*) 'Magistrates Court Sentencing Guidelines'*, retrieved 18th September 2015 from: https://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Sept-2015-MCSG-pdf1.pdf

Shalev, K. (2011) *'Children Who Go Missing Repeatedly and Their Involvement in Crime'*, International Journal of Police Science and Management, vol. 13 no. 1, pp. 29-36

Shalev, K., Schaefer, M. & Morgan, A. (2009) *'Investigating Missing Person Cases: How Can We Learn Where They Go or How Far They Travel?'*, International Journal of Police Science and Management, vol. 11 no. 2, pp. 123-129

Sherman, L. W. (1992) *'Policing Domestic Violence: Experiments and Dilemmas'*, New York: Free Press

Sherman, L. W. (2007) *'The Power Few: Experimental Criminology and the Reduction of Harm'*, Journal of Experimental Criminology, vol. 3 no. 4, pp. 299-321

Sherman L. (2013) *'Targeting, Testing and Tracing Police Services: The Rise of Evidence Based Policing, 1975-2025'* In Tonry M. Editor Crime and Justice Vol. 43, Crime and Justice in America, 1975-2025, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2013

Sherman, L. W., Neyroud P.W. & Neyroud, E.C., (2014) *'The Cambridge Crime Harm Index (CHI): Measuring Total Harm from Crime Based on Sentencing Guidelines'* (Unpublished report for University of Cambridge)

Smith, R. & Greene, S.K. (2014) *'High Risk? Attitudes to the Risk Assessment Process in Missing Person Investigations'*, University of Portsmouth Centre for the Study of Missing Persons, retrieved 17th March 2015 from: http://www.port.ac.uk/media/contacts-and-departments/icjs/csmp/Attitude-to-the-risk- assessment-process--final.pdf

SOCA, Serious Organised Crime Agency (2013) *'Missing Persons: Data and Analysis 2011/2012'*, retrieved 17th March 2015 from: http://www.missingpersons.police.uk/download/29

Stevenson, O., Parr, H., Woolnough, P. & Fyfe, N. (2013) *'Geographies of Missing People: Processes, Experiences and Response'*, Economic and Research Council, retrieved on 25th March 2015 from: http://www.geographiesofmissingpeople.org.uk/downloads/Stevenson-et-al.pdf

Tarling, R. & Burrows, J. (2004) *'The Nature and Outcome of Going Missing: The Challenge of Developing Effective Risk Assessment Procedures'*, International Journal of Police Science and Management, vol. 6 no. 1, pp. 16-26

Thames Valley Police (nd) *'Delivery Plan 2014-15'*, retrieved 20th July 2014 from: http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/4709_2014_delivery_plan_top_level_190514.pdf

Thames Valley Police (2014) *'Missing & Absent Persons Standard Operating Procedures for Staff Investigating Incidents of Missing and Absent People'*, Version October 2014, unpublished

Thornton, S (2011) *'Predicting Serious Domestic Assaults and Murder in the Thames Valley'*, unpublished Masters Thesis, Cambridge University

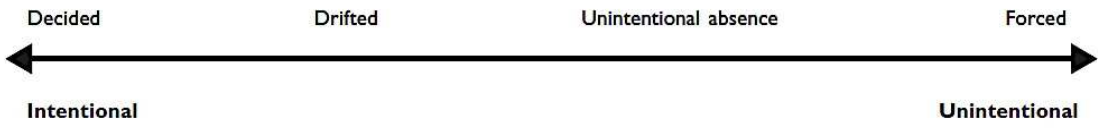
Wade, J., Biehal, N., Clayden, J. & Stein, M. (1998) *'Going Missing: Young People Absent from Care'*, Chichester: Wiley

Weinborn, C., Ariel, B. & Sherman, L. (2015) *'Hotspots vs. Harmspots: Shifting the Focus from Counts to Harm in the Criminology of Place',* (Appendix: The Crime Harm Index "Menu"), Unpublished working paper, Cambridge University

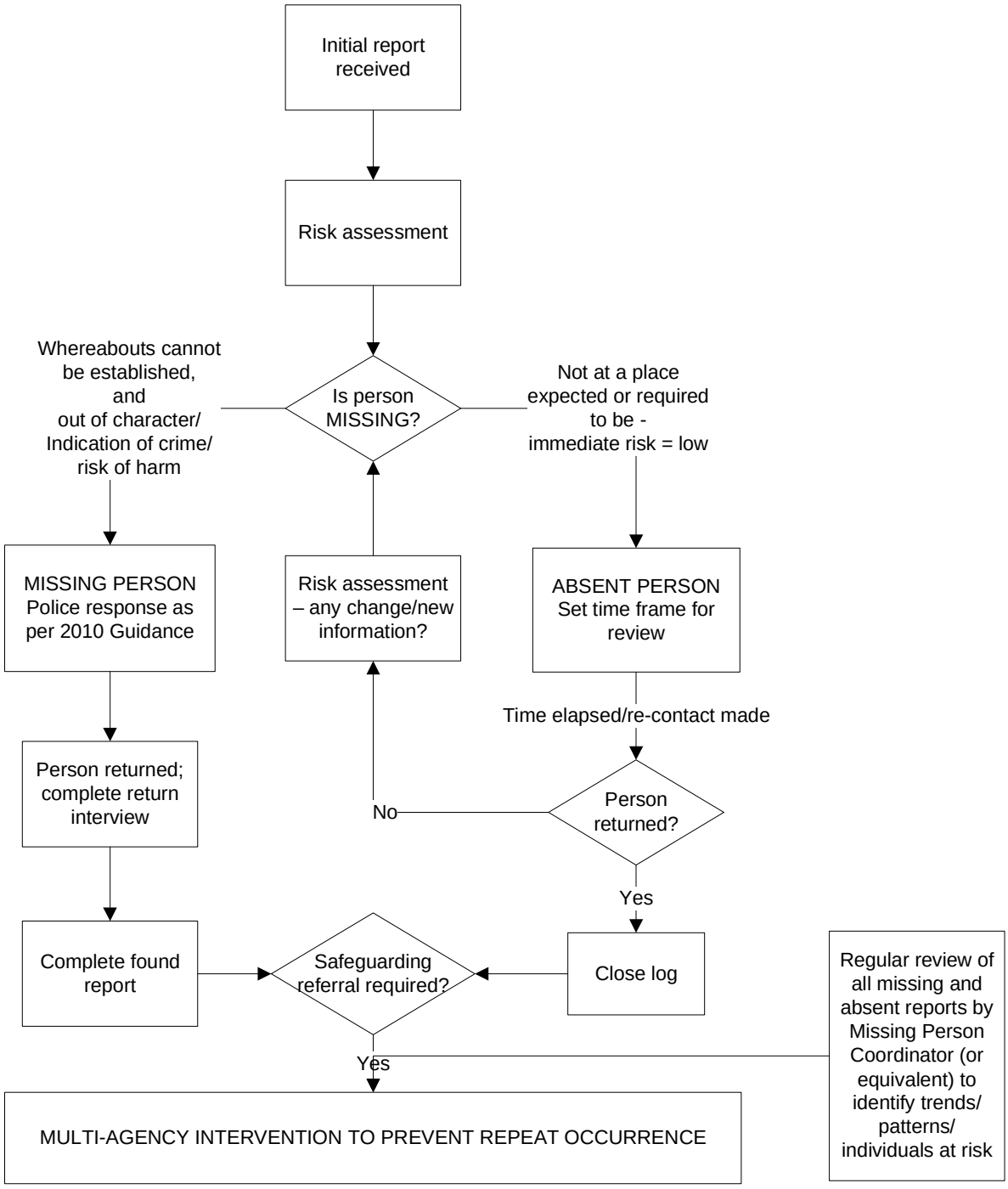
White, E.B. & Montgomery, P. (2015) *'Dementia, Walking Outdoors and Getting Lost: Incidence, Risk Factors and Consequences from Dementia-Related Police Missing-Person Reports'*, Aging & Mental Health, vol. 19 no. 3, pp. 224-230

Appendices

Appendix 1: The Missing Person Continuum, Biehal et al. (2003, pg.3)



Appendix 2: Work Flow Diagram for the New Approach, COP (2013, pg.9)



Appendix 3: GEN35 Missing Person Risk Assessment Form, TVP (November 2014 version)

Missing Person Investigation

THAMES VALLEY POLICE

A missing person report may be the start of a murder investigation, a critical incident, or the symptom of an ongoing serious safeguarding issue for a vulnerable child or adult. This form must prompt you to ask searching questions at the start of the investigation. The prompts are not exhaustive and you must use your professional judgement to ascertain not just WHERE they are but WHY they are missing.

MISSING PERSON

FIRST NAME(S):		SURNAME:			
OTHER / NICKNAME:		DOB:		GENDER:	
NICHE OCCURRENCE:		C&C URN			

ALL vital information which will assist in locating the missing person MUST be telephoned through to PEC immediately & supervisors must be briefed directly. The form must be scanned into the NICHE occurrence before the end of your shift. It must be LEGIBLE written in CAPITAL letters and in BLACK ink

***** UPLOAD TO NICHE TO VICTIM'S PERSON RECORD USING FORMAT: GEN35surnamedate *****

ACPO MISSING PERSON DEFINITION

"Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another."

OFFICER COMPLETING

SHOULDER NUMBER:		SURNAME:	

PERSON REPORTING

NAME:		CONTACT NUMBER:	
RELATIONSHIP TO MISSING PERSON			

ADDRESS DETAILS

PLACE LAST SEEN :	
TIME LAST SEEN & BY WHOM:	
ADDRESS MISSING FROM (IF DIFFERENT):	
HOME ADDRESS (IF DIFFERENT):	

DESCRIPTION

HEIGHT:		BUILD:		ETHNICITY:	IC

HAIR

COLOUR:		SECOND COLOUR:		STYLE:		LENGTH:	

FACIAL HAIR

BEARD:		MOUSTACHE:		COLOUR:		SIDEBURNS:	

EYES

COLOUR:		SECOND COLOUR:		LENSES / GLASSES:	

OTHER DETAILS

FIRST LANGUAGE:		OTHER LANGUAGE:		ACCENT:	
ARE THEY CARRYING ANYTHING:					
MEDICATION & EFFECTS IF NOT TAKEN:					
GP DETAILS- IF MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES OR ON MEDICATION:					

Page 1

Gen35 – Nov 2014

NOTABLE PHYSICAL FEATURES / MOBILITY OR COMMUNICATION AIDES / MARKS /SCARS / TATTOOS / JEWELLERY / PIERCINGS:

CLOTHING WORN WHEN LAST SEEN:	

RECENT PHOTOGRAPH OBTAINED AND UPLOADED TO NICHE:	YES ☐	NO ☐	DATE PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN:	
DETAILS OF SCHOOL ATTENDED:				

DETAILS OF BANK ACCOUNT (IF MORE THAN ONE ACCOUNT PLEASE ADD TO 'ADDITIONAL INFORMATION')

BRANCH DETAILS:					
ACCOUNT NO:		SORT CODE:			

PHONE DETAILS

NUMBER:	SERVICE PROVIDER:	CONTRACT DETAILS: (I.E. BILL PAYER)

App for finding friends / phone in use by missing person?	YES ☐	NO ☐	NOT KNOWN ☐
DETAILS:			

EMAIL ADDRESS

EMAIL ADDRESS 1:	
EMAIL ADDRESS 2:	

SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS (I.E. FACEBOOK, TWITTER, GOOGLE+, MYSPACE, INSTAGRAM.)

ACCOUNT TYPE	USERNAME	PASSWORD

VEHICLE DETAILS

MAKE:	MODEL:	REGISTRATION:

OTHER MEANS OF TRANSPORT USED BY MISSING PERSON

PLACES FREQUENTED / SIGNIFICANT LOCATIONS / PLACES PREVIOUSLY FOUND

Associates name, address and contact details

NAME	ADDRESS / CONTACT DETAILS	REMARKS
		RELATIONSHIP:
		RELATIONSHIP:
		RELATIONSHIP:
		RELATIONSHIP:
		RELATIONSHIP:

CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO DISAPPEARANCE – intentions, preparations, travel arrangements, additional clothing or full suitcase taken, etc. It is important to seek information that identifies all "push / pull" factors in order to ascertain WHY the person is missing, and to prevent future episodes.

RISK ASSESSMENT - ensure **ALL** details transferred to the NICHE RMS missing person record via ORC process – This form will NOT be reviewed as a matter of course. If answer is YES additional information MUST be provided.

RISK ASSESSMENT 1

1. What is the specific concern that has caused you to call the Police?

2. What has been done so far to trace this individual?

3. Is this significantly out of character (has there been a recent change in the person's behaviour?) **YES** ☐ **NO** ☐

4. Do they need urgent medical attention or essential medication that is not likely to be available to them? YES ☐ NO ☐

5. If under 18 yrs are they currently at risk of child abuse including child sexual exploitation? YES ☐ NO ☐

6. Are they likely to be subjected to any other crime? YES ☐ NO ☐

7. Are they likely to be the victim of any other form of abuse? YES ☐ NO ☐

8. Are they likely to attempt suicide? YES ☐ NO ☐

9. Do they pose a danger to other people? YES ☐ NO ☐

10. Is there any other information relevant to their absence? (e.g. power of arrest associated with mental health order) YES ☐ NO ☐

All the above will be asked by PEC but require revisiting by attending officer to ensure all relevant information captured

RISK ASSESSMENT 2

11. Is this person detainable under any mental health legislation? If so, what is the legislation? YES ☐ NO ☐

12. Is the person vulnerable due to other factors? YES ☐ NO ☐

13. Is the person particularly at risk of harm due to physical disability, frailty or memory loss? YES ☐ NO ☐

14. Does the person lack the ability to interact safely with others in an unknown environment (Mental illness, learning disability and/or sensory impairment)? YES ☐ NO ☐

15. Has the person been involved in a violent, homophobic or racist incident immediately prior to disappearance? YES ☐ NO ☐

16. Any child safeguarding concerns (subject to child protection plan, known to social care/PVP and/or specific PNC warning flag triggered? YES ☐ NO ☐

17. Is the person suffering from a drug or alcohol dependency? YES ☐ NO ☐

18. Any social concerns (family/relationship/employment/financial/school/college)? YES ☐ NO ☐

RISK ASSESSMENT (please tick checkbox)

After consideration of all the factors what do you consider the risk assessment should be? Brief your duty supervisor immediately and confirm the risk level then telephone the PEC to update the NICHE occurrence

HIGH RISK: The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the subject is in danger through their own vulnerability; or may have been the victim of serious crime, or the risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing the public is in danger. ☐

MEDIUM RISK: The risk posed is likely to place the subject in danger or they are a threat to themselves or others. ☐

LOW RISK: There is no apparent threat of danger to either subject or the public. ☐

CONSENT FORM

Consent for all actions is required at the time of initial report.

	YES	NO	N/A
Search of premises occupied by missing person including grounds and associated outbuildings	☐	☐	☐
Examine, take a copy and retain any material considered relevant to the enquiry into the disappearance of the person named in the report i.e. diaries, address books etc	☐	☐	☐
Property Ref:_____			
Photograph to be retained within NICHE:_____	☐	☐	☐
Details being passed to **www.missingpeople.org.uk** – who will make enquiries and offer support in relation to this investigation	☐	☐	☐
Initiate 'Text safe' confidential text by **www.missingpeople.org.uk**	☐	☐	☐
Information and photograph being placed on **www.missingkids.co.uk** website	☐	☐	☐
Information being passed to media	☐	☐	☐
Enquiries with banks, post offices, telephone providers.	☐	☐	☐
Information sharing with safeguarding partners e.g. Social Care, Barnados etc	☐	☐	☐

NAME:		SIGNATURE:	
RELATIONSHIP TO MISSING PERSON:		DATE / TIME:	

Any other relevant information

ENSURE ALL IMPORTANT INFORMATION IS PASSED TO THE PEC IMMEDIATELY AS THIS FORM MAY NOT BE REVIEWED IMMEDIATELY

***** UPLOAD TO NICHE TO VICTIM'S PERSON RECORD USING FORMAT: GEN35surnamedate *****

Detach & hand to person reporting

Frequently Asked Questions

- **What will the Police do to find the person I have reported missing?**
  - Experience shows that the vast majority of people who go missing are found safe and well within hours of being reported, Officers will follow set procedures on every occasion to maximise investigative opportunities. Do not worry unduly about standard questions asked.
  - Whilst the safe return of the missing person is always the priority, there are often underlying causes for a person to go missing which will also form part of the investigation. Questions may be asked of you, to assist in identifying associated crimes, financial worries, relationship factors, physical/mental health concerns or other areas which, if appropriately addressed, may prevent future missing occurrences. Some of these questions may appear personal but please assist the investigation by answering the questions as fully and honestly as you can.
  - The Police may need to take a personal item relating to the missing person such as a photograph, toothbrush or hairbrush (for potential forensic examination purposes), details of bank accounts, social networking and email address details. Do not be unduly alarmed at this as it is standard procedure when persons are reported missing.
  - The Police may pass details of the missing person to other agencies in order to assist with the search e.g. Neighbourhood Return (for persons with dementia / memory problems), rescue groups, hospitals, schools, social care, and public transport providers. This will all be done in accordance with data protection regulations and in the interest of locating the missing person.
  - Information provided may be shared with partners in order to assist the investigation, both to locate the missing person and to establish any reasons behind their disappearance.

- **How can I help further?**
  - If, on reflection after making the initial report, you realise there is something which you forgot to mention, it is important that you contact us immediately. Even the smallest detail could turn out to be crucial to our enquiries. It is also vital that you inform us immediately should the missing person be located.
  - If the missing person contacts you or you receive any relevant information you should phone 101 ASAP and quote the reference number below.
  - The Police and possibly our partners will need to conduct a 'return' interview as part of the investigation once the missing person is located. Please do everything you can to make this interaction meaningful as it may uncover problems you were previously unaware of.

- **Who else can assist me if the investigation becomes long-term?**
  - People can go missing for extended periods. Other agencies can assist in offering support to relatives, gaining publicity to increase the search options and encourage the missing person to make contact. The advice they can give is free, friendly and confidential so please do not hesitate to seek their help.
  - **Missing people** – call or text '*missing people*' on freephone 116 000 (or go to www.missingpeople.org.uk) they also provide a 'message home' service which allows 'runaway missing persons' to record a message in confidence that is passed on to the person the caller has named. (email 116000@missingpeople.org.uk)
  - **Reunite - www.reunite.org** assist in cases where a child may have been abducted and removed from the UK by an estranged parent. Tel: 0116 2555 345 Address: P.O Box 7124 Leicester LE1 7XX. **reunite@dircon.co.uk**.
  - **The Salvation Army - www.salvationarmy.org.uk** Tel: 020 7367 4500 run a family tracing service Address: 101 Newington Causeway, London SE1 6BN. **info@salvationarmy.org.uk**.
  - **www.police.uk** has links to other organisations which may offer assistance.

NICHE occurrence reference number: _____

Command & Control URN_____

Appendix 4: Guidance for Missing Persons Investigations - Safe and Well Checks

GUIDANCE FOR MISSING PERSONS INVESTIGATIONS

SAFE & WELL CHECKS

(Replaces the word sighting – Misper must **always** be spoken to)

- The ability to listen to and take account of the views of children and vulnerable adults can help build rapport and obtain better information on reasons for their absence and what happened whilst away
- Remember to ask open questions such as `Tell me what happened, explain to me, describe to me..
- To be effective the safe & well check must be investigative and not judgemental especially when dealing with vulnerable adults and children
- Be aware that if the missing person is in care, they may be willing to tell the Police more than they would Social Services because they are afraid of being moved from their current care home.
- All potential crimes must be identified and pro-actively investigated even when the child or vulnerable person refuses to engage with us – evidential corroboration must be sought from all potential sources
- Full details obtained during safe & well check must be added to NICHE on the relevant Missing Persons occurrence and, where appropriate, an intelligence occurrence.
- Demeanour of the person must be considered and noted, i.e. is their appearance dishevelled? Injuries? Has the clothing changed since reported missing? Is clothing wet/dry in accordance with weather conditions? etc
- Are they wearing appropriate/new clothing?

CID 201 8/14

- [redacted] Evidence of gifts? Have they got more than one mobile phone?
- [redacted] Evidence of alcohol or substance misuse?
- [redacted] Who was the person with & did they feel safe?
- [redacted] Where had the person been & how did they get there?
- [redacted] Did the person return home of their own accord?
- [redacted] What was the missing person running to or from?
- [redacted] Is there any indication that the person has been involved in sexual relationships whilst missing?
- [redacted] Where was the person found/collected from? What type of place is this?
- [redacted] If MP was found at address of another child ensure adults at the address are aware that child was reported missing
- [redacted] What was the reason for going missing?
- [redacted] What help or support does the person require to prevent them going missing again in the future? Are they already involved with other agencies?
- [redacted] Has the person been a victim of crime during the period that they were reported missing?
- [redacted] Is there any indication that the person was involved in committing crime(s) during the period they were reported missing? i.e. shoplifting, drugs
- [redacted] Talk to the family or carers as well and record what they tell you – changes in behaviour, details of names, places, vehicles the person has spoken about but has not mentioned to Police

[redacted] If a photo was not available during their absence, obtain one before closing the investigation to assist should they go missing again

CID 201 8/14

Appendix 5: Missing / Absent Persons Standard Operating Procedures

Missing / Absent Persons Standard Operating Procedures

Before describing the results, it is important to understand the process of recording a missing or absent person. The following procedures apply to TVP, however other forces are likely to have similar processes in place. When TVP initially receives a report of a missing or absent person, the call is recorded on a system known as Command & Control. This system is used to record initial enquiries and to deploy officers on the ground if needed. Here, the call taker follows the TVP Missing & Absent Persons Standard Operating Procedures Manual (TVP, October 2014). Based on the policy, the following persons will always be categorised as missing: 1) any child aged 14 and under; 2) all sex offenders (Violent and Sex Offender Register, VISOR nominal and 3) all children with Child Sex Exploitation (CSE) flags, CSE intelligence or child abduction notices. Children are defined as anyone under the age of 18. Up to this point, it would appear that the policy allows for anyone aged 15, 16 or 17 to be classed as absent if they do not fit the above criteria. However, the policy then clearly states further along that a missing child (anyone under 18) 'must' be graded as medium or high-risk. Furthermore, anyone aged 14 or under must be reviewed 'immediately' by a Superintendent. In practice, this means contacting the Duty Superintendent regardless of the hour to discuss the case.

The call taker would record brief details of the call and begin initial PNC (Police National Computer) checks on the missing people to determine if there are any flags

or markers on their record. The call taker would go through ten screening questions with the caller:

Table 14: Risk Assessment One (TVP, October 2014)

Question Number	Question
1	What is the specific concern that has caused you to call the police?
2	What has been done so far to trace this individual?
3	Is this significantly out of character (has there been a recent change in this person's behaviour?
4	Do they need urgent medical attention or essential medication that is not likely to be available to them?
5	Are they currently at risk of child abuse including CSE?
6	Are they likely to be subjected to any other crime?
7	Are they likely to be the victim of abuse?
8	Are they likely to attempt suicide?
9	Do they pose a danger to other people?
10	Is there any other information relevant to their absence?

If any of the answers to questions 3-10 are a 'yes', then the individual must be treated as a missing person. In other words, if all the answers to questions 3-10 are 'no', and they do not fall into the categories above requiring them to be treated as a missing person, then the individual will be treated as absent. The policy goes on to state that any answers that are unknown would be recorded as a 'no'. The study will critically evaluate these responses against the risk gradings.

If an individual were classed as an absent person based on the above criteria, then the caller would be advised to make their own enquiries. The call taker would agree with the caller a review time that is appropriate but that is no longer than twelve hours. This is reviewed by the control room sergeant who needs to decide based on the information recorded whether to keep it as an absent case or upgrade it

to missing. If it remains as absent, then it is managed completely by control room. Officers on the front line would have no involvement and would not be informed about absent cases.

Calls to police are graded to help prioritise resources. The gradings starting from lowest to highest priority are: 1) telephone resolution, 2) by arrangement, 3) urgent and 4) immediate. Any calls treated as an urgent requires a police officer to arrive at the scene within an hour; whereas immediate calls set this time limit at 15 minutes. Telephone resolution and by arrangement calls have no time limit and in most telephone resolution resolved cases, police attendance may not be required. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss the attendance policy in further detail.

Once the call has been graded and a decision made that the individual will be treated as missing, it would be sent to local police officers to progress. They would be despatched to see the caller and would complete a full risk assessment on a form called the GEN35 (see Appendices, Appendix **3**). The call taker would have completed 'Risk Assessment 1' on the form; these are the ten questions listed above. The attending officer would go through these questions again and also complete the rest of the form including 'Risk Assessment 2'. The attending officer, together with the supervisor, will determine the risk grading, remembering that all children are graded as medium or high-risk. TVP currently records missing persons on a database known as Niche RMS (Record Management System). The attending officer would be responsible for ensuring the information on the GEN35 is recorded electronically on Niche RMS and the GEN35 scanned. The level of police involvement will depend on

the risk grading. High-risk cases would tend to be run from the Command & Control database due to the number of fast time enquiries and resourses involved. Once the enquiries slow down, they would be run from Niche RMS and the Command & Control log would be closed down. Unless there is a need for control room involvement, low and medium risk cases would be run directly from Niche.

Once an absent individual is located, both the Command & Control and the Niche RMS records are updated and closed down. If someone is absent for a prolonged period of time, it is reviewed. If there are no concerns, it will remain as an absent and the Command & Control log is closed. From hereon, a civilian missing person co-ordinator would manage the absent report within Niche RMS and the appropriate referrals to partner agencies are made. At any point during this process, the absent person may be upgraded to missing if new information comes to light. If a missing person is located, an officer must complete a 'Safe and Well' check. In the past, this just consisted of an officer going to physically check that the missing person has returned or found. In recent years, it has been identified that opportunities had been missed to ascertain if the person has come to any harm whilst they were missing. As part of this process, officers must consider a list of points and record these in Niche RMS. These points are on an aid memoire called a CID 201 to assist officers with this whilst out on patrol (see Appendices, Appendix 4).

Appendix 6: Supplementary Findings

Supplementary Findings

As this study was exploratory in nature, there were findings that were noteworthy but did not strictly fit into the parameters of the research questions. As a result, they have been included here in the Appendices. The supplementary findings present the results concerning characteristics of missing people, with the topics covered being: 1) Gender; 2) Age; 3) Ethnicity; 4) Repeat missing or absent individuals; 5) Absconders from hospital or local authority care; 6) Repeat missing or absent locations and 7) Temporal analysis.

What are the characteristics of missing and absent people in TVP?

A performance tool called Business Objects has been used to extract the data into an Excel spreadsheet for descriptive analysis. The data has been grouped broadly into two categories: 1) missing and 2) absent. This study has used the date of births of each individual as well as age groupings to allow for a more detailed analysis and critical evaluation. This is due to the possible likely differences in circumstances and reasons for someone going missing dependant on their age. For example, there may be more medical concerns for someone elderly as opposed to someone in their twenties and, likewise, a child under 10 years old is likely to be more vulnerable than a 17-year-old. The age groups 14 and under, and 15 to 17, have been selected to fit in with missing and absent persons policy (see Appendices, Appendix 5). Other variables have been extracted such as locations and ethnicity to help understand the

characteristics of those missing and absent. Postcodes have been extracted and converted into easting and northing co-ordinates to work out distances as the crow flies.

It is worth briefly summarising how missing and absent calls for service are prioritised. The majority of missing person reports are treated as urgent (71%) or immediate calls (12%). 53% of all immediate calls relate to low and medium-risk missing people. In comparison, absent reports are generally dealt with by telephone resolution (58%) or by arrangement (22%). Of note is that 16% of absent report had calls graded as urgent and 1% graded as immediate. The section is divided to address: who, where and when of missing and absent people. Only main characteristics have been described. Others that are available in the dataset have not been included as the main focus of the study relates to the latter research questions.

Figure 5: Missing and Absent Persons Call Gradings as Percentage of Status

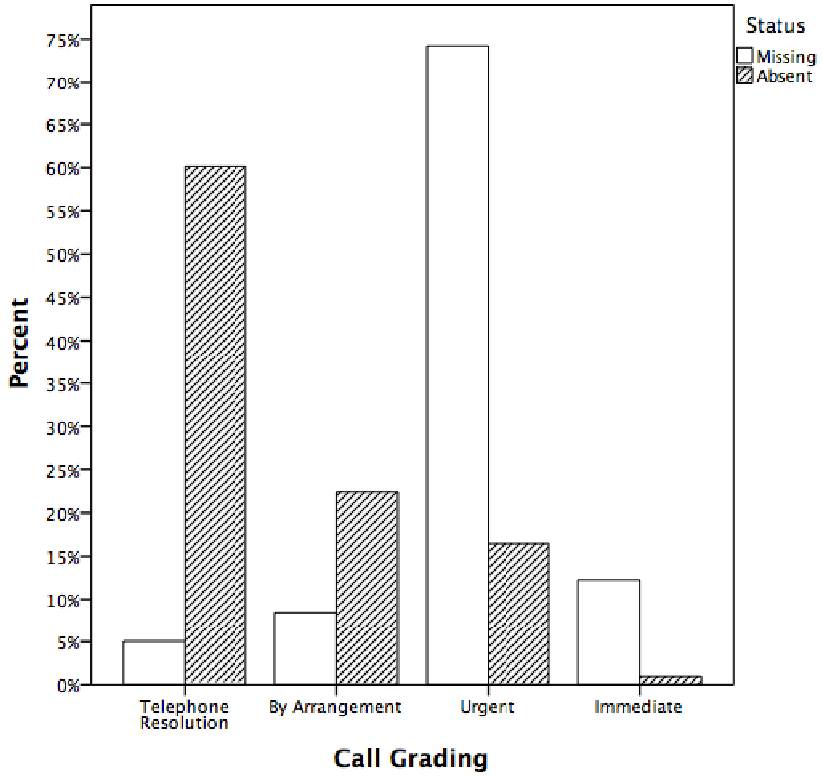
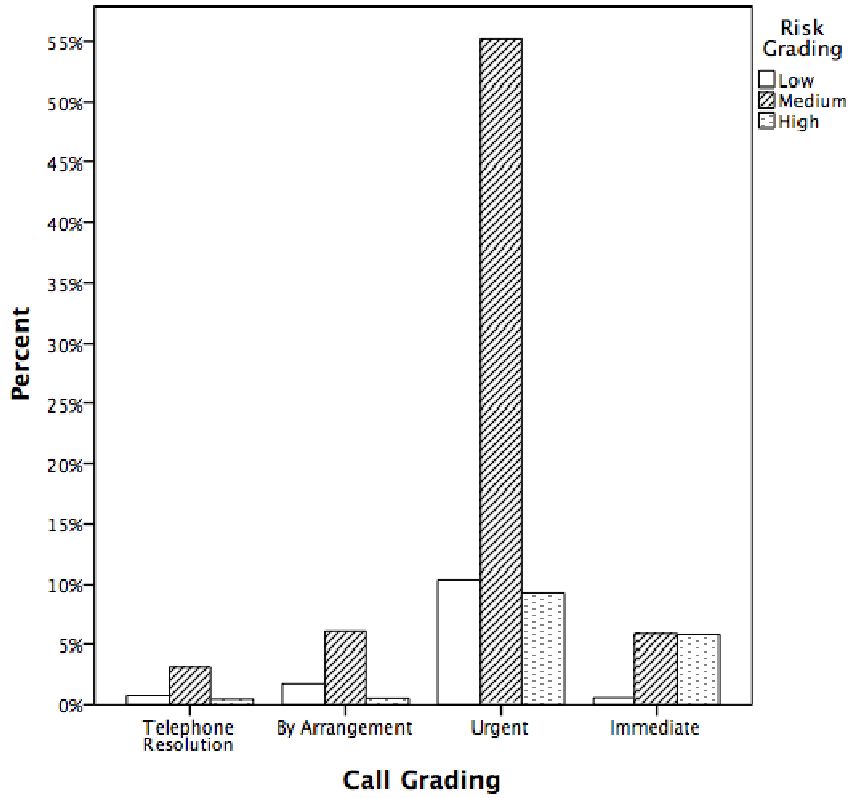


Figure 6: Call Gradings and Missing Person Risk Gradings as Percentage of Total

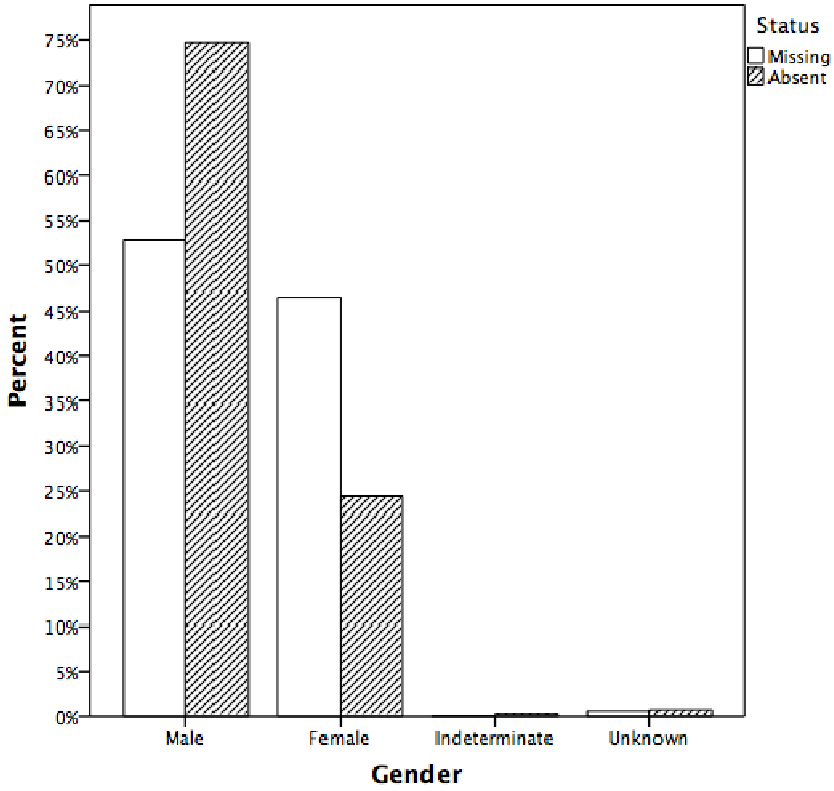


Out of the 5,984 records used for analysis, 85% were missing persons and 15% were classified as absent. There were 75 out of the 869 absent records with a risk grading recorded. This would be due to human error since absent people do not require a risk grading. As a result, gradings attached to absent records have been ignored.

Who: Gender

While more males are reported as missing and as absent, they are particularly likely to be absent rather than missing (Chi-square = 150.07, p = 0.00, n = 5984, Cramer's v = 0.16). Males and females reported missing are not dissimilar (males 53% and female 47%), but absent males outnumber absent females 3:1 (males 75% and females 25% of reported absences).

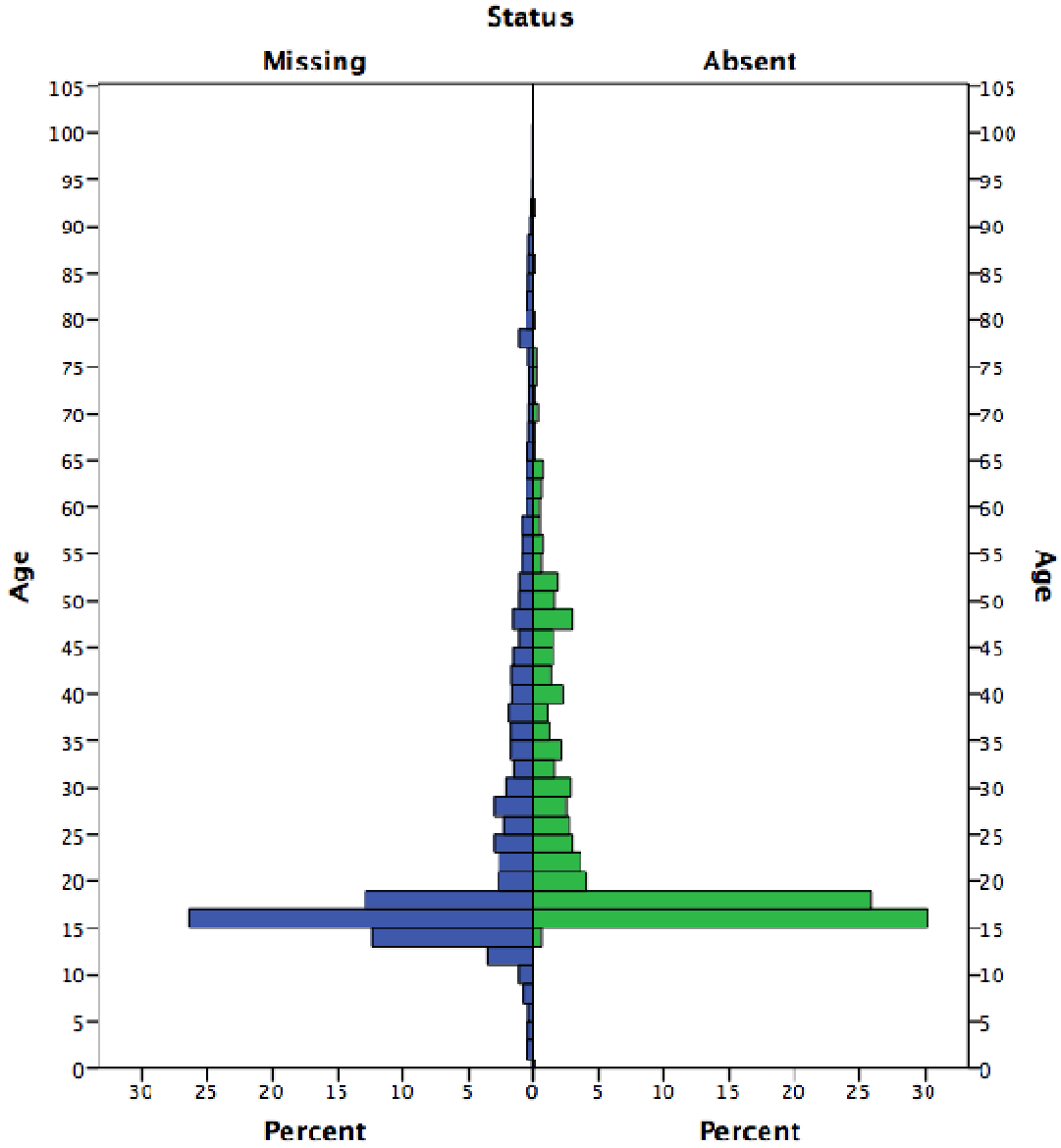
Figure 7: Missing and Absent Persons Gender as Percentage of Status



Who: Age

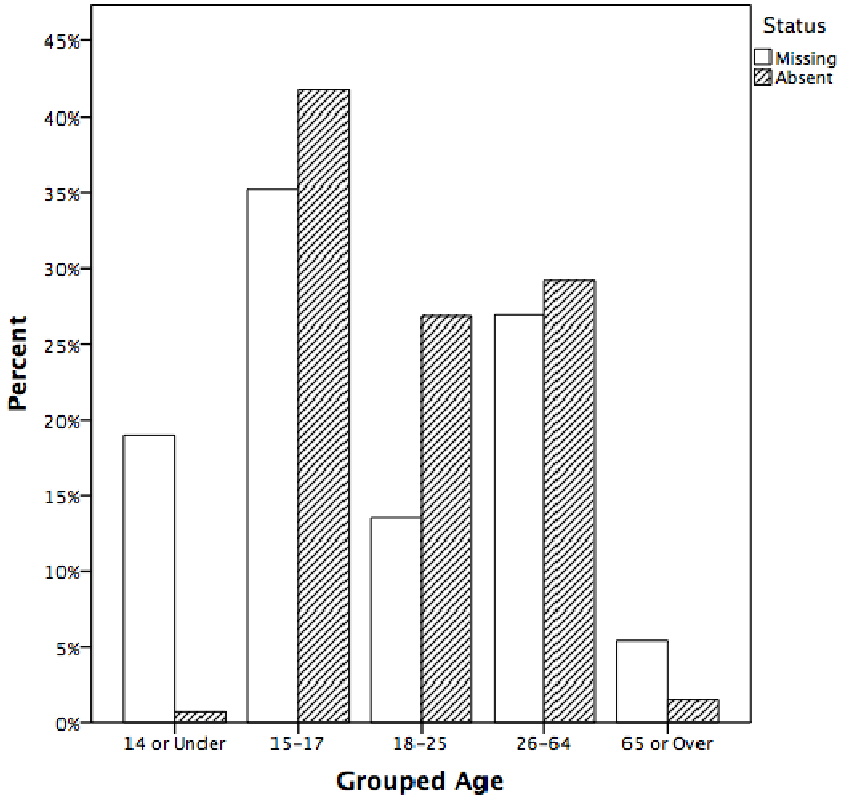
The average age of a missing person is 26 compared to 25 for an absent person. There is no statistically significant association between age (child or adult) and whether someone goes absent or missing. Missing children (under 18) accounted for 56% of missing reports compared to 44% for adults. 1% of the missing records did not have an age recorded. There were 442 absent records where the individual was classed as a child, which goes against current policy. Children accounted for 51% of absent cases compared to 45% for adults. 4% of absent cases did not did not have an age recorded.

Figure 8: Missing and Absent Persons Age as Percentage of Status



Broad grouping of ages shows that children aged 15 to 17 accounted for the greatest proportion of missing reports at 35%, whereas people aged 65 or over accounted for 5% of missing reports. Similarly, children aged 15 to 17 also accounted for the greatest proportion of absent reports at 40%. 19% of missing reports were for children aged 14 or under, compared to less than 1% for absent reports.

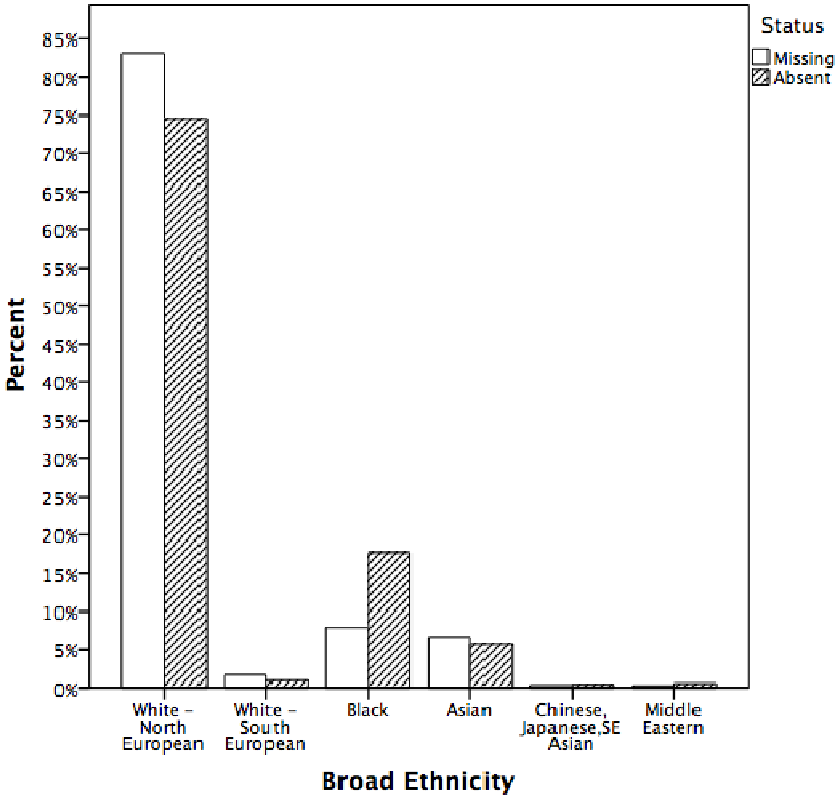
Figure 9: Missing and Absent Persons Grouped Age as Percentage of Status



Who: Ethnicity

Ethnicity is recorded in broad terms and in more specific self-defined terms. Officers would give an individual a broad ethnicity based on their appearance, whilst the individual can choose their own ethnicity amongst a set list. There is a statistically significant association between broad ethnicity and whether someone goes absent or missing (Chi-square = 75.72, p = .00, n = 5336, Cramer's v = 0.12). White northern Europeans are more likely to be reported as missing and absent. The majority of missing and absent individuals were recorded as white northern European, 75% and 63% respectively. However, this is lower than expected since 93% of the population in Thames Valley are classed as white (NHS 2012).

Figure 10: Missing and Absent Persons Broad Ethnicity as Percentage of Status



The table below details the self-defined ethnicities of missing or absent persons. The figures should be treated with caution as 44% of missing and 56% of absent reports did not record a self-defined ethnicity, resulting in low accuracy and issues surrounding response bias.

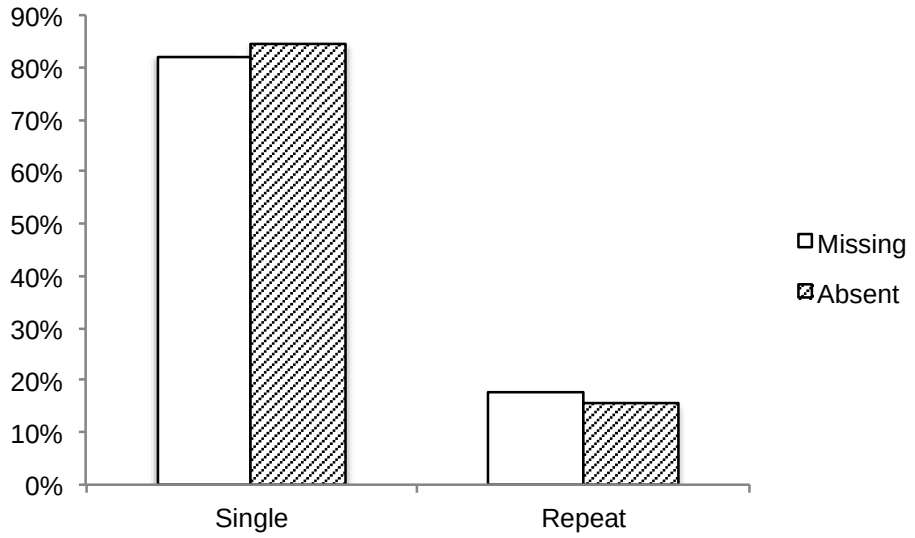
Table 15: Self-Defined Ethnicity as Percentage of Status

Self-Defined Ethnicity	Missing		Absent	
	Count	%	Count	%
NS. Not stated	2237	43.73%	486	55.93%
A1. Asian - Indian	29	0.57%	6	0.69%
A2. Asian - Pakistani	89	1.74%	11	1.27%
A3. Asian - Bangladeshi	3	0.06%		0.00%
A9. Any other Asian background	25	0.49%	4	0.46%
B1. Black Caribbean	31	0.61%	6	0.69%
B2. Black African	49	0.96%	17	1.96%
B9. Any other Black background	30	0.59%	2	0.23%
M1. White & Black Caribbean	101	1.97%	11	1.27%
M2. White & Black African	17	0.33%	1	0.12%
M3. White & Asian	7	0.14%	2	0.23%
M9. Any other mixed background	71	1.39%	17	1.96%
O1. Chinese	1	0.02%	1	0.12%
O9. Any other ethnic group	16	0.31%	1	0.12%
W1. White British	2305	45.06%	287	33.03%
W2. White Irish	18	0.35%	4	0.46%
W9. Any other white background	86	1.68%	13	1.50%
Grand Total	5115	100.00%	869	100.00%

Who: Repeat Missing and Absent

The vast majority of individuals have never been reported missing or absent before during the six month period, with 2700 (82%) of missing individuals compared to 490 (84%) of absent individuals. As a result, 589 (18%) individuals were classed as repeat missing compared to 90 (16%) repeat absent. These repeat individuals accounted for 2415 (47%) of all missing reports and 379 (44%) of all absent reports.

Figure 11: Single and Repeat Missing or Absent as Percentage of Status



The top 25 missing individuals accounted for 9% of all missing reports with the top three reported missing 52, 40 and 37 times respectively over the six month period. These top three will from here on be referred for as MP1, MP2 and MP3 respectively:

Table 16: Top 3 Repeat Missing Individuals

Missing Person	Brief Information
MP1	From Local Authority Care
	17 Years Old
	White Ethnicity
	Female
	From Slough
MP2	From Local Authority Care
	17 Years Old
	White Ethnicity
	Female
	From Reading
MP3	From Local Authority Care
	16 Years Old
	White Ethnicity
	Male
	From Banbury

In fact, out of the top 25 repeat missing individuals, 24 of them are children. Looking at the entire dataset, children are more likely to be repeatedly missing than adults (t (3428) = 25.27, p = 0.00, n = 5051), with a child missing on average 7 times compared to twice for an adult. Furthermore, children in care were significantly more likely to go missing more often than individuals who are not (f (2) = 919.94, p = 0.00, n = 4445). Children in care went missing on average 13 times compared to twice and 5 times for people from hospital and those not in care.

The top 25 absent individuals accounted for 26% of all absent reports with the top three reported absent 38, 22 and 17 times respectively. These top three will from hereon be referred to as AP1, AP2 and AP3 respectively. The top three missing and absent people are all different individuals.

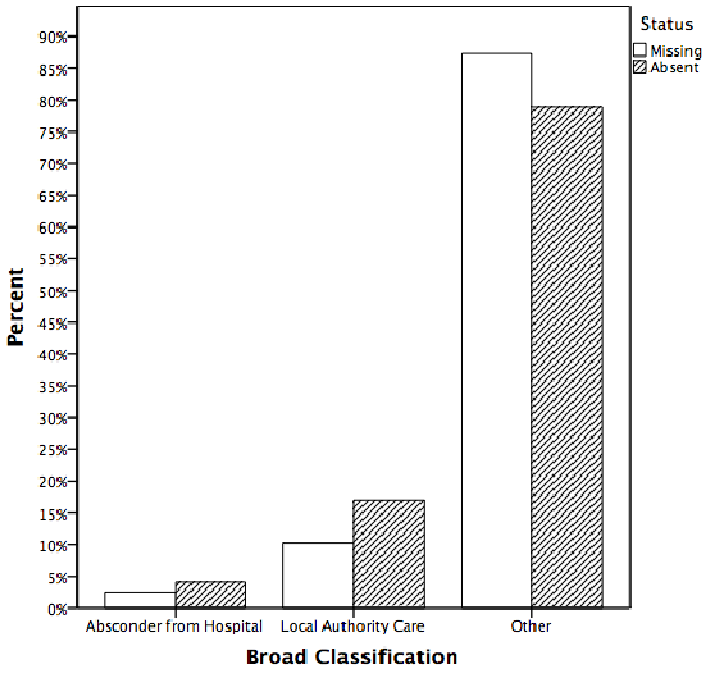
Table 17: Top 3 Repeat Absent Individuals

Absent Person	Brief Information
AP1	From Local Authority Care
	17 Years Old
	Black Ethnicity
	Male
	From Luton
AP2	From Local Authority Care
	15 Years Old
	Unknown Ethnicity
	Male
	From Reading
AP3	Not From Local Authority Care
	48 Years Old
	White Ethnicity
	Male
	From Milton Keynes

Where: Type

When a report is created, an option is available to select the type of missing person known as broad classification. This is optional, allowing for none or multiple options to be selected. The options available include: missing adult, missing child, absconder from hospital or in local authority care. There is a statistically significant association between an individual's broad classification and whether someone goes absent or missing (Chi-square = 30.71, p = .000, n = 5027, Cramer's v = 0.08), albeit with a weak effect size. Absent people are somewhat more likely to be absconding from hospital or from local authority care compared to missing people. 2% of missing person reports were classed as absconder from hospital, and 9% were from local authority care. This compares to 3% and 11% respectively for absent reports. This information must be used with caution due to the optional and inconsistent nature of the recording standards.

Figure 12: Broad Classifications as Percentage of Status



Where: Distances

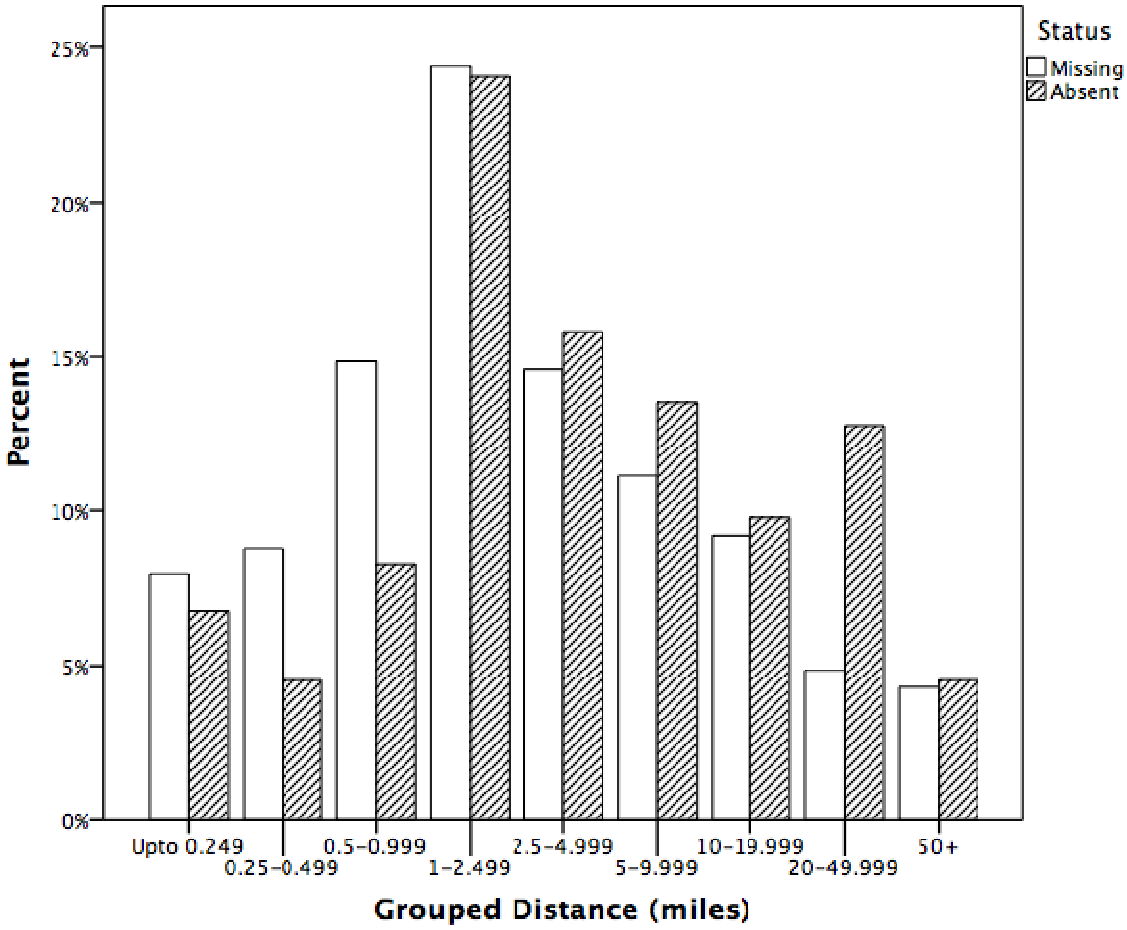
No statistically significant association was found between distance and whether someone is absent or missing. However, in terms of missing people, the data provided an average distance between the missing from and found/returned to location as 10 miles (sd. 160, min. 0 and max. 7771) based on 3,453 cases, with 1,983 cases excluded due to missing data. 14 individuals were located outside the UK in countries such as America, Pakistan and the Netherlands. Removing these cases of the analysis provides an average distance of 5 miles (sd. 19, min. 0 and max. 393).

Removing cases where the distance is zero would provide a more accurate estimate of the distance between where the individual was reported missing and found; frequently the returned to and the missing from location is the same (30% of missing cases). It's important to note that when the returned to and missing from location is the same, it does not mean that the individual had not been missing. It is due to the limitation described in the methodology or simply that the person returned of his or her own accord. Doing so provided 1952 cases for analysis with an average distance of 9 miles (sd. 24, min. 0.02 and max. 393).

Absent cases based on the same criteria (exclude found outside UK and zero distances) provided 133 cases for analysis. For absent cases, the average distance between the location an individual is absent from to where they were found was 11 miles (sd. 19, min. 0.26 and max. 117). The distribution of the distances once grouped, excluding zero distances; show that 619 (32%) of missing individuals were located within one mile of where they went missing. This compared to 26 (20%) for absent

cases. A large proportion of missing or absent individuals were found within 2.5 miles, 1,097 (56%) and 58 (44%) respectively.

Figure 13: Grouped Distance between Missing / Absent From to Found / Returned to as Percentage of Status



Where: Repeat Locations

The top 5 specific locations accounted for 194 and 36 missing and absent reports respectively. For missing reports: a children's' home in Slough (46 reports relating to six individuals); a children's home in Kidlington near Oxford (41 reports relating to five individuals); a mental health hospital in Reading (37 reports relating to 28 individuals);

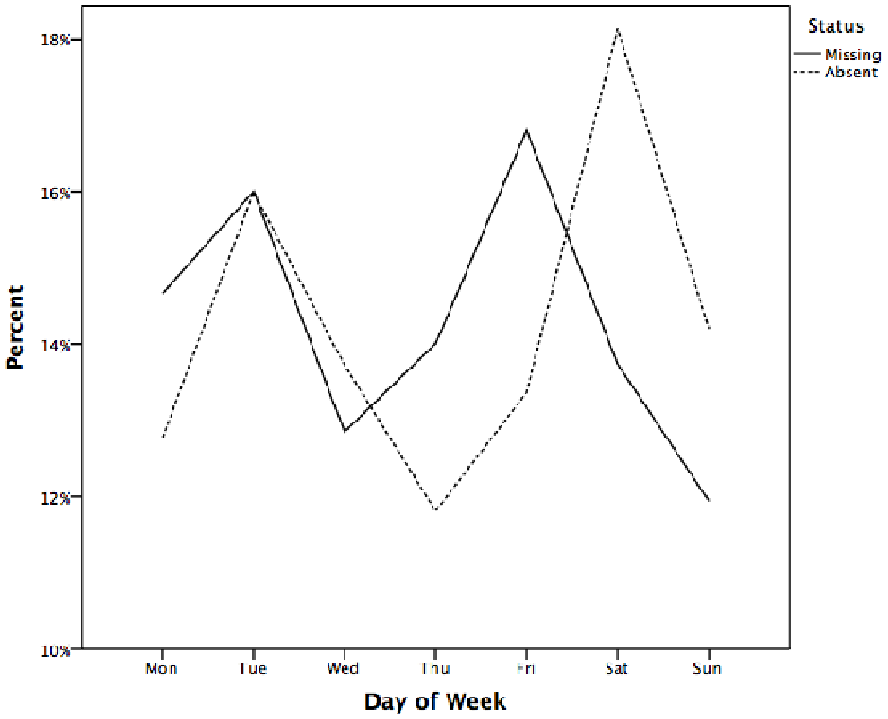
a children's home in Aylesbury (35 reports relating to eight individuals); and a children's home in Reading (35 reports relating to four individuals) were the top locations.

For absent reports the top locations were: a hostel in Slough (25 reports relating to four individuals); a children's home in Slough (19 reports relating to five individuals); a special needs school in Slough (18 reports relating to eight individuals); a children's home in Reading (15 reports relating to two individuals); and a supported living hostel for 16 to 21 year old in Slough (13 reports relating to three individuals). The results indicate that repeat locations appear to relate to a few individuals (excluding the mental health hospital).

When: Day of Week

There is a statistically significant association between the day of the week someone is reported and whether someone goes absent or missing (Chi-square = 18.497, p = .005, n = 5984, Cramer's v = 0.056), although with a weak effect size. People are more likely to be reported as missing or absent on a Tuesday than any other day, accounting for 17% of total reports. Tuesdays and Fridays account for the greatest proportion of missing person reports at about 16% of total missing reports for each day. Tuesdays and Saturdays accounts for the greatest proportion of absent person reports about 17% and 19% respectively of the total absent reports for each day.

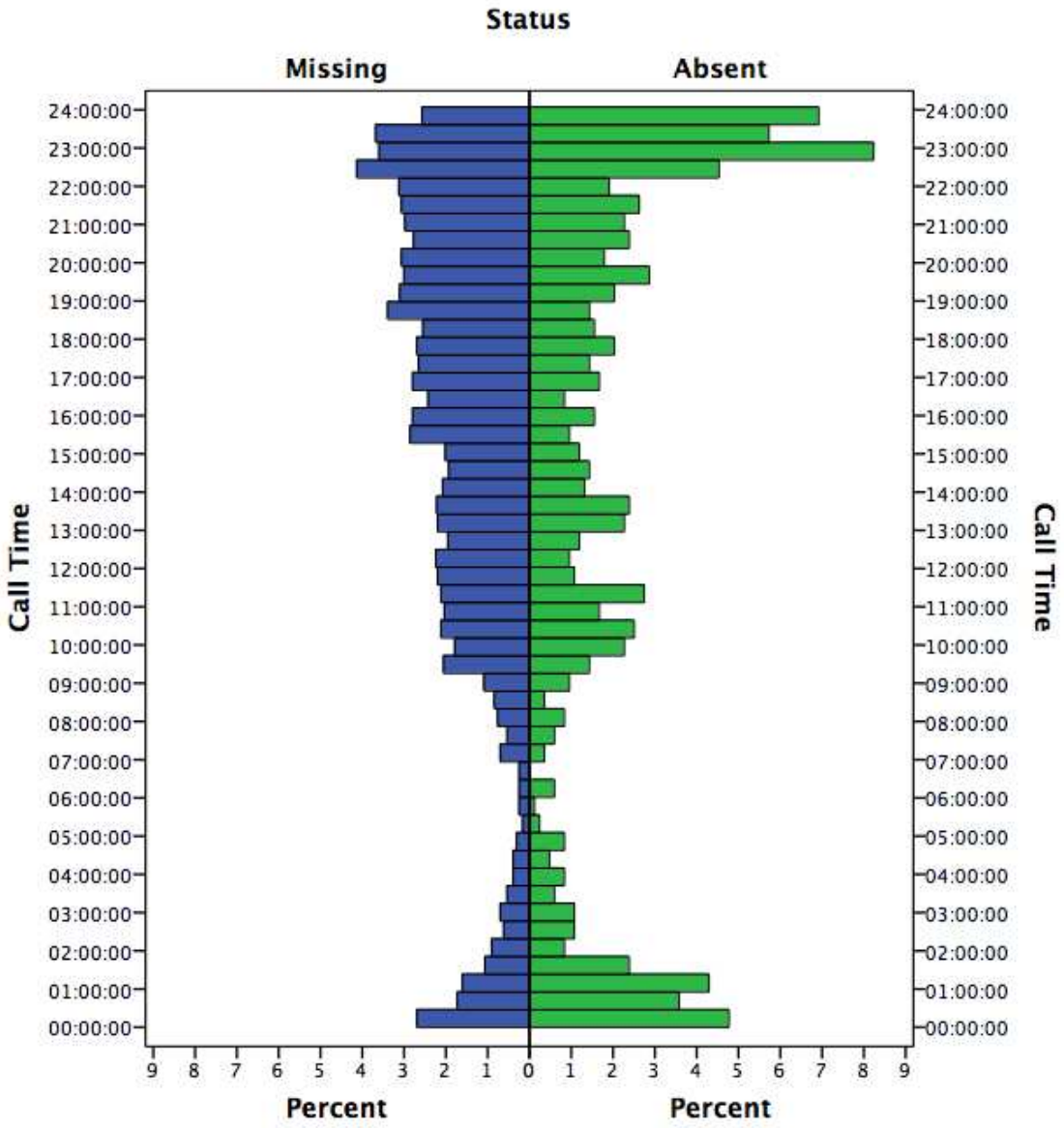
Figure 14: Day of the Week of Report as Percentage of Status



When: Time of Day

No statistically significant association was found between the time police were notified (exact call time from Command and Control) and whether someone is reported as absent or missing.

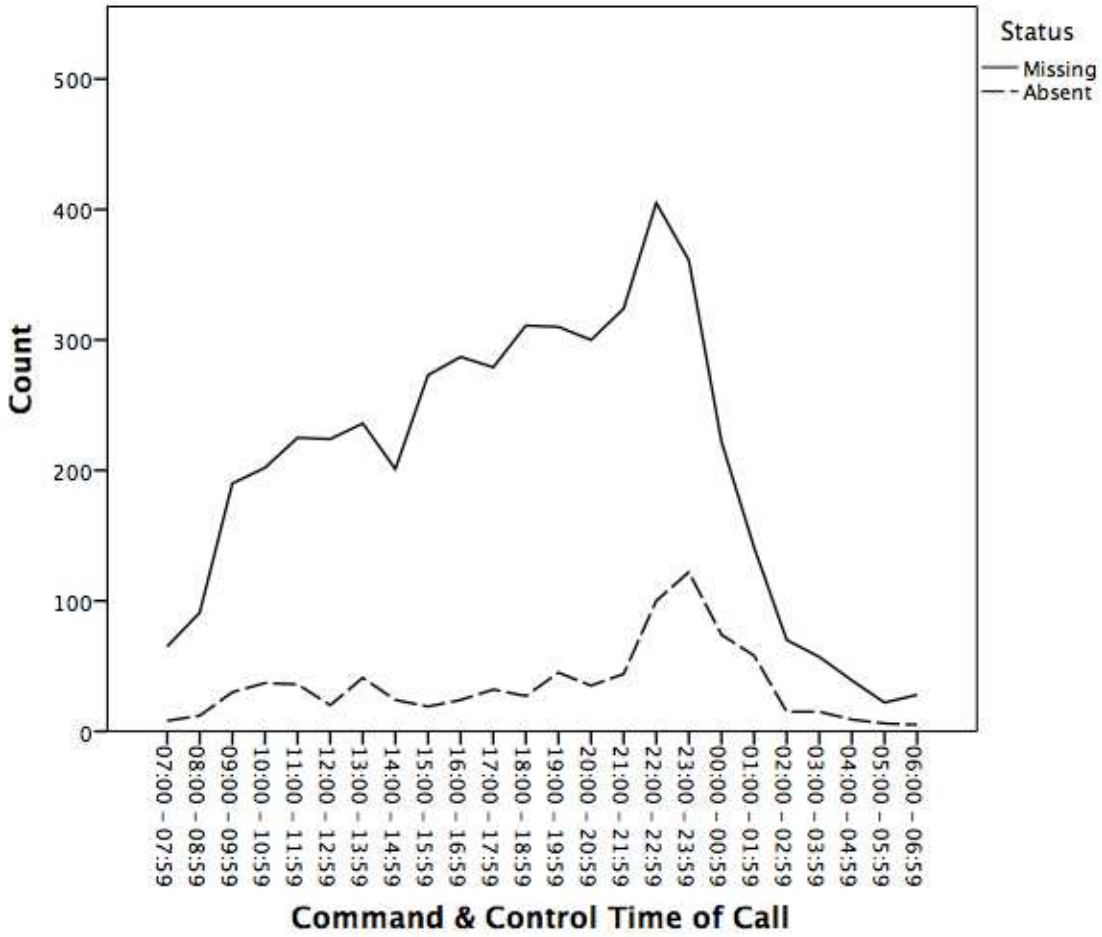
Figure 15: Time of Report as Percentage of Status



When the time of reports was grouped hourly, the most busy and most quiet hour was an hour later for absent people compared to missing people. For missing person reports, the busiest hour was between 22:00 and 22:59 where 405 reports were made. The quietest period was between 05:00 and 05:59 hours where 22 reports were made. For absent reports, the busiest hour was between 23:00 and 23:59 where 122 reports were made. The quietest period was between 06:00 and

06:59 hours where 5 reports were made. The results were significant (Chi-square = 182.10, p = 0.000, n = 5701, Cramer's v = 0.18). 283 reports had missing data so time calculations were not possible for those cases. Uniform patrol starts their first shift at 07:00 hours in TVP. As can be seen from the chart below, the number of absent and missing reports rises throughout the day and drops suddenly after around midnight.

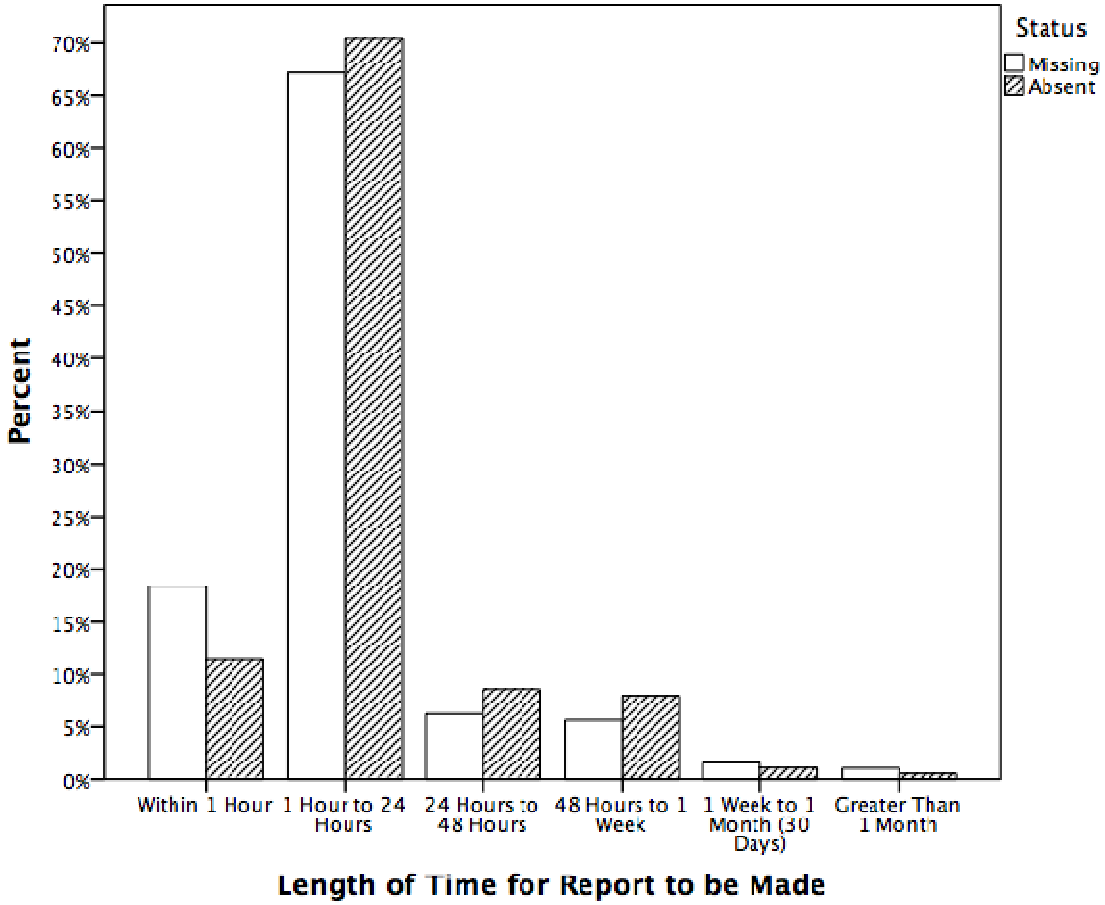
Figure 16: Number of Missing and Absent Calls based on Grouped Time of Report



When: Length of Time

Length of time for report to be made: No statistically significant association was found between the length of time it took for police to be notified (from exact call time) and whether someone is reported as absent or missing. Once the timings were grouped, missing people are more likely to be reported sooner than absent people from the time they were last seen (Chi-square = 33.567, p = 0.000, n = 5250, Cramer's v = 0.080). Of the reports that were made within one hour, 91% were for missing people compared to 9% for absent. Reports made within 24 hours accounted for 85% of all records (74% missing compared to 11% absent). The length of time it takes to report has been calculated by taking the difference between the time of report from Command and Control and the time the missing or absent person was last seen. The Command and Control time of call was used as opposed to the Niche time of Report as the former is more accurate as it is based on the actual call time, whereas Niche is based on the time the Niche record was created. 734 reports had missing data so time calculations were not possible for those cases.

Figure 17: Length of Time for Report to be made as Percentage of Status



Length of time missing / absent: On average, absent people were missing for 35 hours, compared to 59 hours for missing. No statistically significant association was found between the length of time someone was missing and whether someone is reported as absent or missing ($t(5662) = 0.68$, $p = 0.50$, $n = 5664$).

Figure 18: Length of Time Missing Cumulative Percentage up to 48 Hours

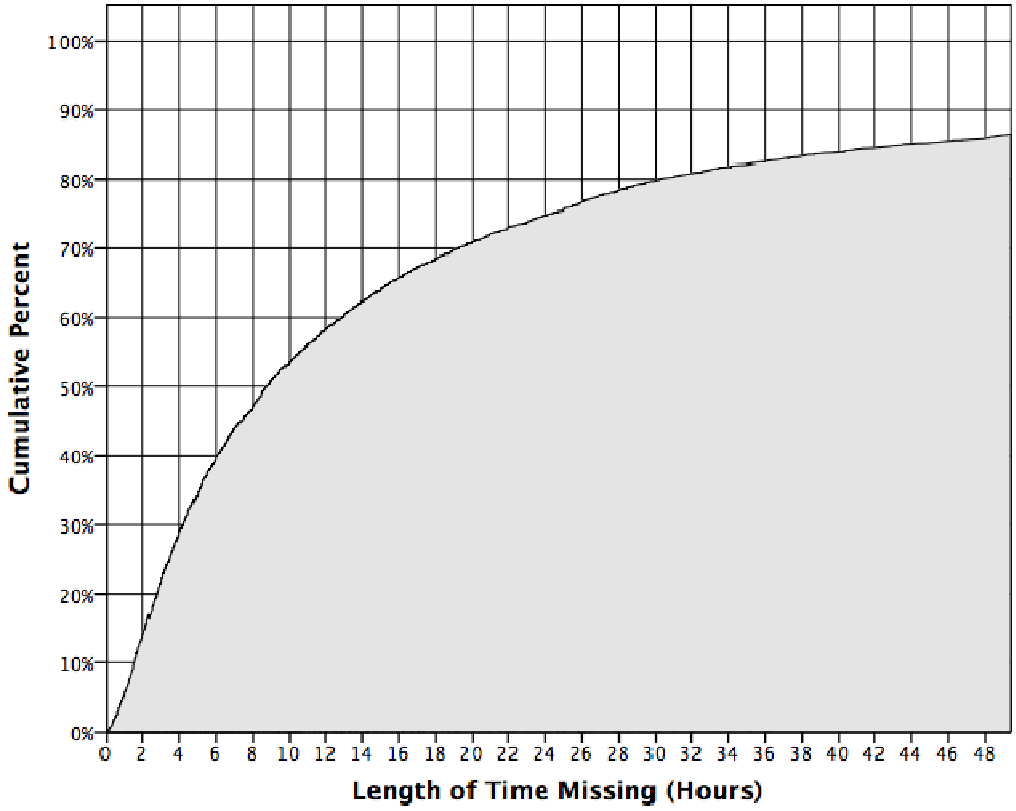
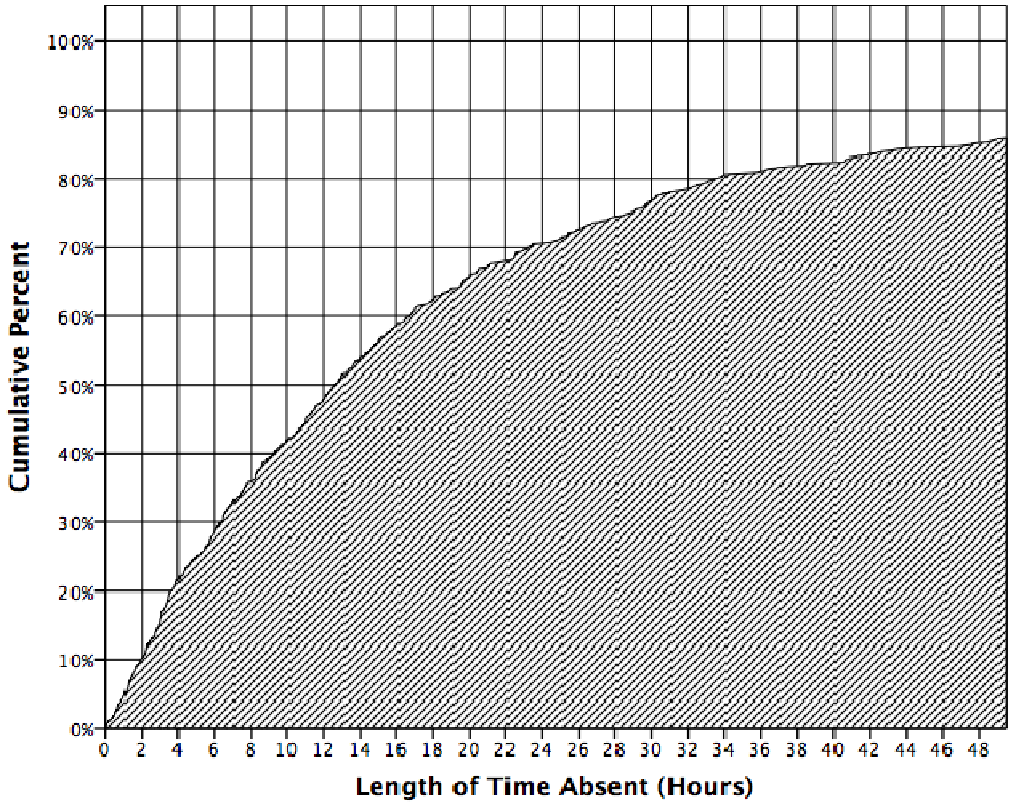
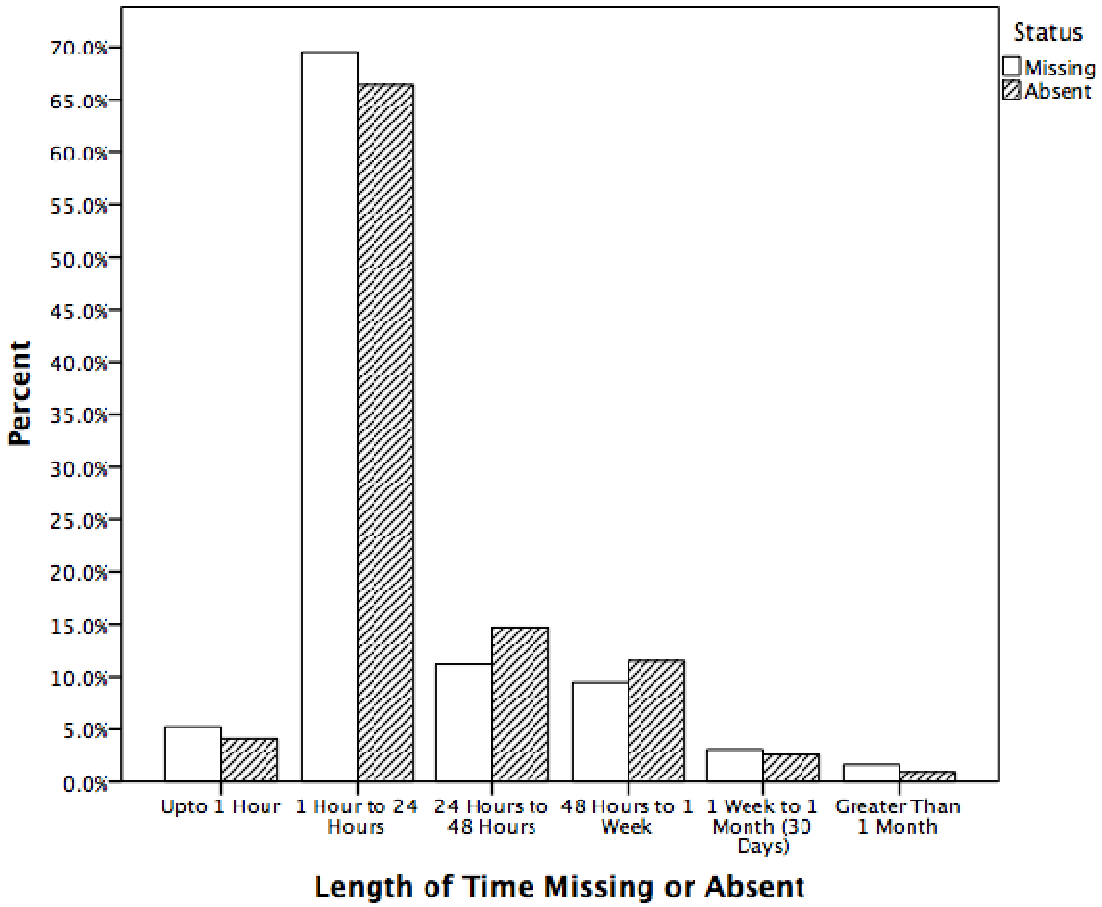


Figure 19: Length of Time Absent Cumulative Percentage up to 48 Hours



Once the timings were grouped, missing people are more likely to go missing for less than 24 hours than absent people (75% of missing cases and 70% of absent cases). The results were significant (Chi-square = 16.11, p = 0.007, n = 5665, Cramer's v = 0.53). The length of time has been calculated by taking the difference between the time found and the time the missing or absent person was last seen. 319 reports had missing data so time calculations were not possible for those cases.

Figure 20: Length of Time Missing or Absent as Percentage of Status



Time it takes to find: No statistically significant association was found between the length of time it takes to locate someone (from exact call time) and whether someone is reported as absent or missing (t (4618) = 0.53, p = 0.60, n = 4620).

Figure 21: Length of Time Missing Persons Cumulative Percentage up to 48 Hours

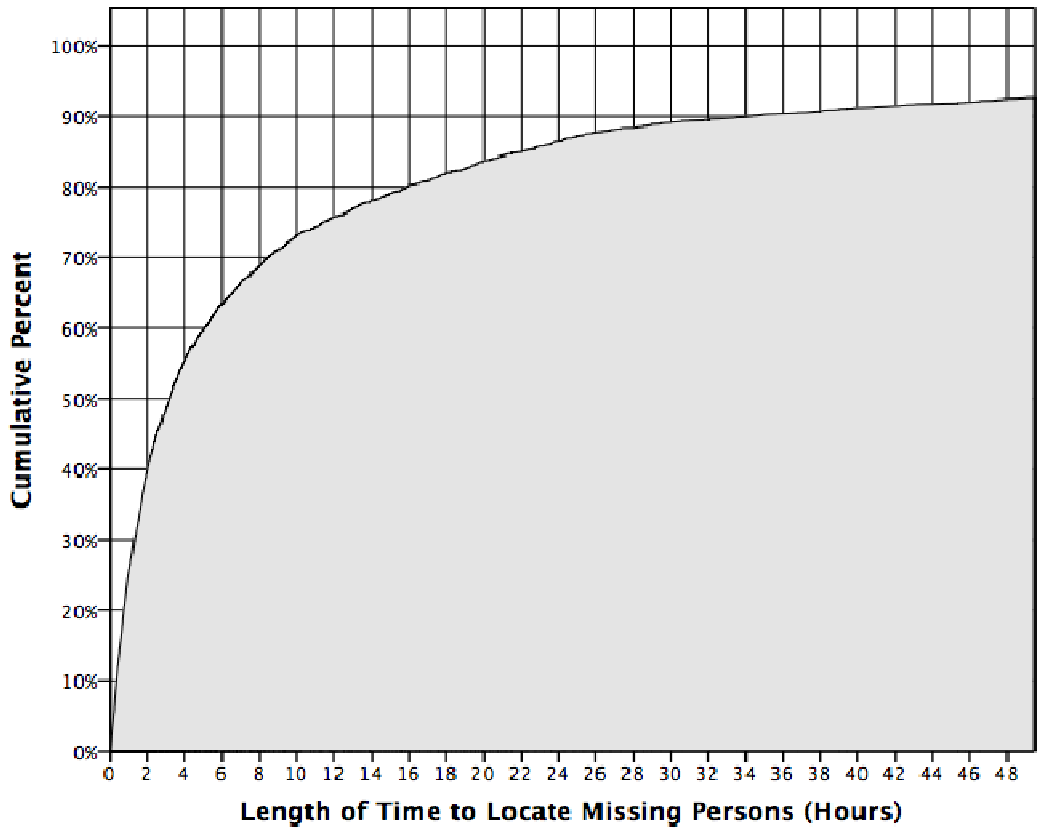
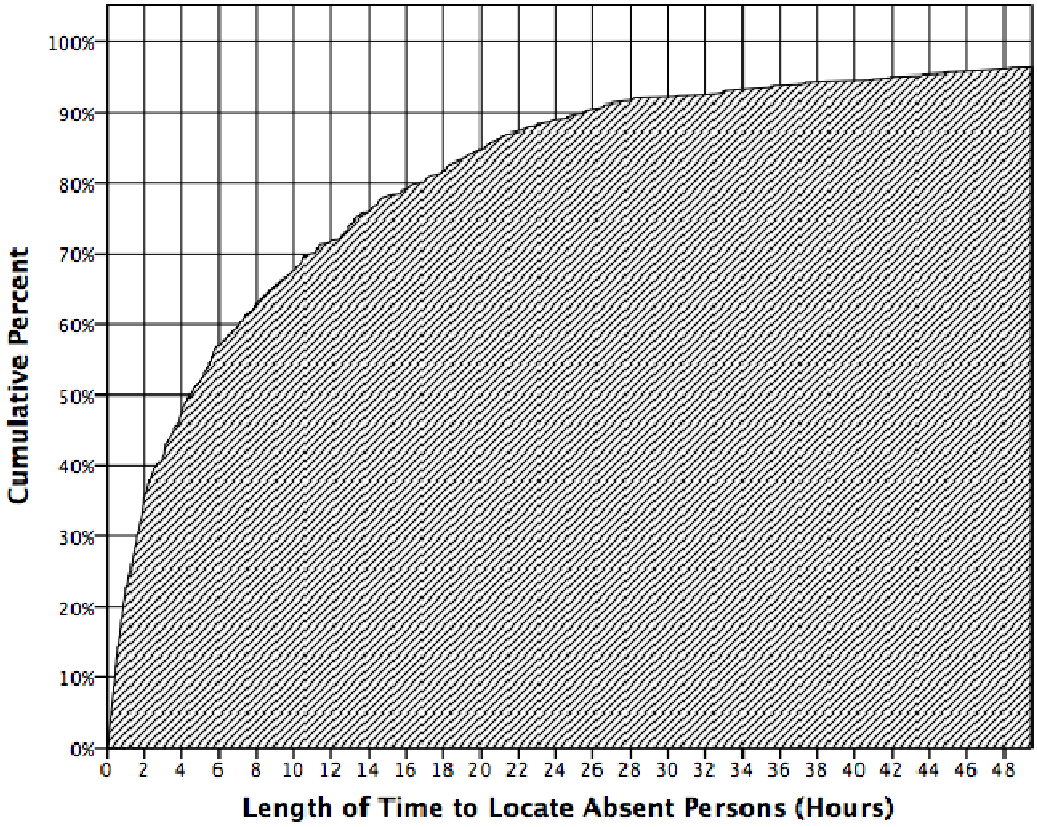
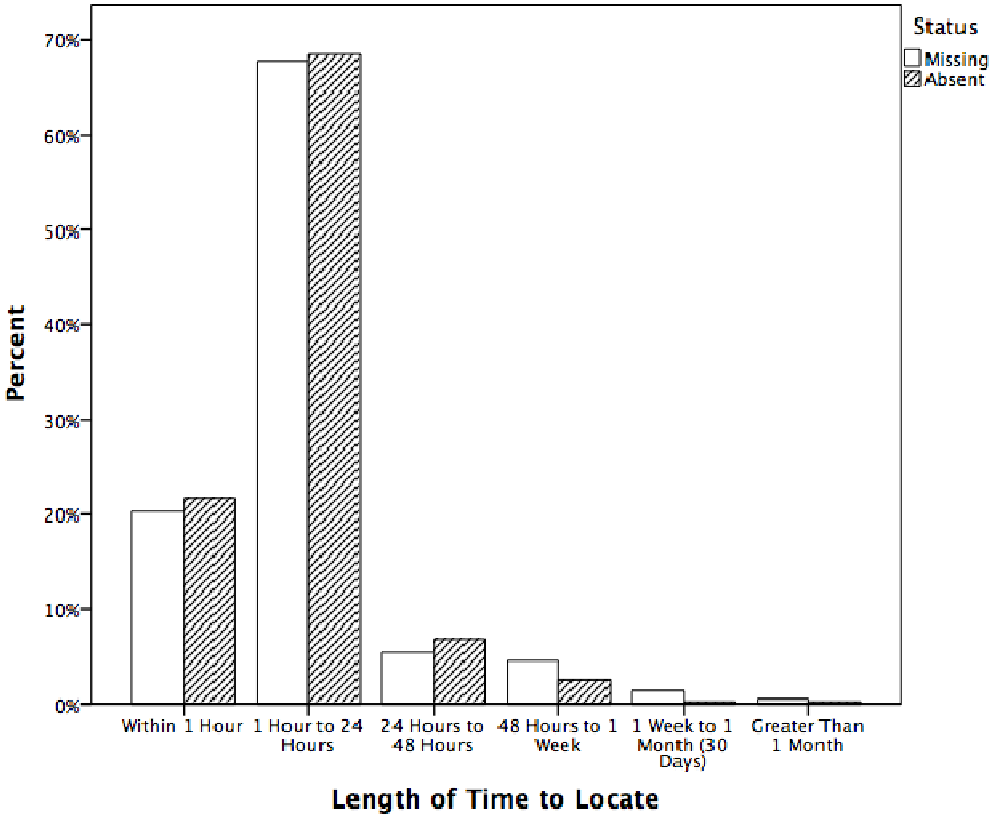


Figure 22: Length of Time Absent Persons Cumulative Percentage up to 48 Hours



Once timings were grouped, absent people were more likely to be found sooner than missing people. 98% of absent people are found or returned within 48 hours, compared to 93% for missing people. The results were significant (Chi-square = 19.054, p = 0.002, n = 5653, Cramer's v = 0.058). The length of time it takes to locate someone has been calculated by taking the difference between time they were found and the time of the call to police, according to Command and Control. 331 reports had missing data so time calculations were not possible.

Figure 23: Length of Time to Locate as Percentage of Status



No Crime Harm

Ethnicity: Individuals not from a white North European or black background were less likely to suffer any crime harm (Chi-square = 57.76, p = 0.000, n = 5336, Cramer's v = 0.10). 46% of white North European and 41% of black people did not have an associated crime occurrence. This compared to 60% of white South European, 58% of Asian and 90% of Chinese, Japanese or South East Asian people.

Crime Harm

Ethnicity and Role: There is no significant relationship between the ethnicity of a missing or absent person and whether they are a suspect or victim in an associated crime occurrence.

Appendix 7: Discussion of Supplementary Findings

Discussion of Supplementary Findings

The study found that males are more likely to report as missing and absent, but they are much more likely to be absent with three times more absent males than absent females. This supports the study by Biehal et al. (2003) which found that adult males are reported more frequently than woman. However, this is different to the findings by Ayers and Bird (1932) who found that males and females go missing in the same proportion. Contrary to Ayers and Bird (1932), the results show that children go missing and absent more than adults. The study found that children aged 15 to 17 were reported missing at a higher rate than other age groups, accounting for 35% of all reports. This is also true for absent reports where this age group accounted for 40%. This is similar to the findings by Beihal et al (2003) which found that people aged 13 to 17 were reported missing at the highest rate compared to other age groups. The majority of missing and absent people were white northern European, with 75% reported as missing compared to 63% for absent. This is not unusual given that 93% of the general population of Thames Valley being white (NHS, 2012). The proportion of people from a white background were not as high as what was found by Biehal et al. (2003); it was found that 85% of missing people were white. However, this difference maybe a reflection of the sample used and the varying demographic of different police forces.

The study found that there were individuals who were repeatedly reported as missing or absent, with the top three missing and absent people being different individuals. 18 out of the 25 top repeated missing individuals had come from local authority care and 24 of the 25 individuals were children. Children were significantly more likely ($p = 0.000$) to be repeatedly missing, with an average of seven times compared to twice for adults. The finding corroborates the study by Biehal et al. (2003), which found that that a greater proportion of young people went missing three or more times. It should be noted that this particular finding of theirs was based on a much smaller follow up sample of 114 compared to the current study. Children in care are also significantly more likely to go missing more, with an average of 13 times compared to those who are not. This supports the finding by Shalev (2011).

Related to this is the existence of repeat locations; the study found the top 5 locations for both missing and absent reports predominantly came from children's' homes. This observation was also seen by Shalev (2011) where it was found that children placed in care tend to go missing more. This lends support to greater partnership working with Social Services and care home staff to locate missing people and prevent them from going missing in the first place. It is also possible that care home staff may lack the training needed to engage with young people or the policies in place do not encourage staff to take responsibility, with their first action being to call the police prior to making simple initial enquiries.

Appendix 8: Discussion of the Recommendations

Discussion of Recommendations

Harms needs to be recorded more accurately and consistently if police are to seriously look at how best to prevent and reduce harm. At present, the harm is not recorded clearly in a missing person report either as suspect or victim. Introducing extra compulsory fields that need to be completed once a person has been located, would help officers and partner agencies improve their risk assessment process, particularly since harm may also include non-crime harm. Furthermore, any occurrences created whilst a person was missing need to be related to the missing person occurrence. This would greatly assist in identifying the occurrences linked to a specific period of missing. The study found that this proved problematic and extremely time consuming to do manually. This additional responsibility could be assigned to missing person co-ordinators across the force as they are already quality assuring all reports before closure. The final recommendation in relation to harm is to introduce a policy that ensures any individual who is detained under section 136 of the mental health act and all sudden deaths must have the relevant occurrence created. At the moment, section 136 occurrences are not always created and most sudden deaths are not recorded on Niche. Only those deemed suspicious or a suicide are usually recorded. Police are required to attend sudden deaths, but there does not appear to be a clear policy to determine when an occurrence needs to be created. It is not believed that the requirement for officers to create an occurrence at each sudden death they attend will create an additional strain on resources as most of the time; officers face a lengthy

wait for undertakers to arrive. Whilst they are waiting, they could easily create the necessary occurrence over the phone.

The data shows a proportion of missing and absent return of their own accord. It is suspected that a larger proportion of individuals do so, but this information is not accurately recorded. It is recommended that a separate compulsory field is made available to indicate whether someone returned by themselves. This will help both further research in the future and the police in identifying those who are more likely to return with little or no police involvement.

At present, all domestic violence calls go through an initial 'DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment) Checks'. This is usually done prior to an officer being despatched and reveals information known about the couple to the officers attending to assist them in the risk assessment process. A similar process for missing reports will help control room determine if a report should be missing or absent and officers to determine the risk level if missing. The following information could be summarised in the 'Misper Checks': 1) date of last report; 2) number of times missing; 3) last risk grading; 4) number and type of non-crime occurrences; 5) number and type of crime occurrences; 6) times person was a suspect or victim in those occurrences and 7) PNC checks. These checks could be done by IRB (Information Research Bureau), who currently complete PNC and DASH checks for all domestic violence calls.

It is recommended that the term 'low-risk' when grading missing people should be changed to 'standard risk' as is current practice for risk assessing domestic

incidents. This change would help with public perception. The term 'low-risk' may give members of the public the immediate impression that police do not take the report seriously.

Without further research and improvements to the data, the study does not recommend that children should be treated as absent. Results indicate that the likelihood of serious harm is extremely low and death even more so. However, should a child be seriously harmed, it may result in irreparable damage to the public perception and trust in the police service in its duty to protect the most vulnerable. It is beyond the scope of the study to re-write the whole missing persons' policy, but it is recommended that children in certain circumstances could be graded as low-risk. These circumstances could be those who have no indication of harm recorded in the past, history of returning of their own accord, always returning within 24 hours, and currently with friends. That's not to say that they should automatically be considered low-risk, but officers should be allowed to make a professional judgment given the individuals circumstances of the case and other information available to them, such as the 'Misper Checks'.

The view that children should not be treated as 'absent' is supported given how vulnerable children can be, so by grading them as missing makes it compulsory that it is managed by the LPA and overseen by the area Duty Inspector. However, the policy that requires all children to be graded as medium-risk appears disproportionate and risk-adverse. It understood that the policy might potentially help manage public perception in the unlikely event that the child is harmed and the public realise that the

police viewed the child as 'low-risk'. It is felt that there are some children who have no indicators of harm, possibly aged 16 or 17 when they are almost an adult, but legally a child, at an age when they can have full time employment; officers should be able to use their training and experience to grade them as low-risk if circumstances deem this to be appropriate. Taken together with the change of terminology from 'low-risk' to 'standard risk', it may help senior officers and partner agencies accept such a shift in policy. Such a grading still needs be constantly reviewed as required by the current policy and have sufficient oversight by the Duty Sergeant and Duty Inspector.

There were 1,133 (22%) missing reports where the person was aged 16 or 17, with 90% graded as medium-risk, 3% as low and 7% as high. The average CHI value was relatively low for both low and medium-risk for this age group, with low being 0.9, medium 1.6 and high 13. The higher the risk level, the higher the average CHI value ($f(2) = 18.83$, $p = 0.000$, $n = 1,131$). Taking into consideration the risk of harm also being low, at around 1%, it believed there is evidence to support this policy change. It provides an opportunity to save significant police resources without unduly placing vulnerable people at risk. The 'Misper Checks' would also provide further information to the call taker to grade the response more appropriately, as the results showed above that 53% of all immediate graded calls for missing people were when they were graded as low or medium-risk.

The analysis of word counts indicates that little information is collected to determine the risk grading, particularly with risk assessment two which is significantly

lower than risk assessment one. Furthermore, the difference between high and medium-risk is only one word, and this difference is significant. It is recommended that further training would be useful in completion of the risk assessment. It is felt that individuals need to be probed more during the risk assessment process in order to gather as much relevant information as possible. The current policy which stipulates that a single 'yes' response to questions three to ten means the case must be treated as missing rather than absent is blunt, ineffective and leads to a high level of false positives. Details of the response need to be taken into consideration and control room needs to be able to use their professional judgement. The worry that a civilian call taker may make the wrong decision is reduced given the fact that all potential missing or absent calls are reviewed by a control room sergeant. Given that a proportion of missing people, particularly those likely to be repeatedly missing are from local authority care, it is also recommended that staff at the care home receive further training. Anecdotally, officers have reported that care home staff have little or no information about the children they care for, even down to basic information such as description and family background. Missing people who repeatedly go missing from a care home environment on average are likely to cause greater levels of harm. As a result, although beyond the control of the police, care homes should be selected so that repeated missing children are looked after by staff that have knowledge and experience in managing delinquents.

Since a large proportion of missing people are of school age, it is recommended that School Liaison Officers should have a greater role in managing missing children. They could do so by intelligence gathering and keeping information such as associates,

conflicts at school and places frequented up to date to help officers better risk assess and locate them sooner.

The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) was launched in TVP in 2014. The team handles all children and adult social care referrals and is made up of social services, police officers, health professionals and council staff. It enables more effective information sharing. In conjunction with joint protocol between TVP and Children's Social Care, partnership working as improved. However, the information that is passed to police from partner agencies is not often recorded in a manner to assist front line officers when dealing with missing persons and help with their decision on risk grading. It is therefore recommended that similar to DV incident, the Risk Management Occurrence is used for individuals referred to on the MASH due to their vulnerability or the number of times they repeatedly go missing. Within the Risk Management Occurrence, there would be information that partner agencies have shared with TVP to assist in risk assessing and locating the individual when they are reported missing again. Furthermore, any crime or non-crime harm which the missing or absent person chose to disclose to partner agencies but not the police could be accurately recorded. The missing persons record could be updated and additional occurrences created where necessary. This would also improve the accuracy of evaluating harm missing and absent people experience, not only in any future research, but also in assisting officers with the risk assessment and providing further information for the 'Misper Checks' described above.

Some areas within TVP are working closing with the charity Barnardo's in an initiative called "R U Safe". Part of the initiative involves Barnardo's contacting young people aged between 11 and 18 who have been reported missing and returned home. They receive referrals directly from TVP and their staff complete further 'Safe and Well' interviews with these young people to encourage engagement and offer additional support, which also includes counselling. The results of the study has found that the more officers are able to engage with missing people during the 'Safe and Well' interview, the more likely they are to identify those who experience harm. Young children may be reluctant to engage with police officers directly, but may open up to others more experienced with working with young people. The study has not assessed directly the effectiveness and value for money of the "R U Safe" initiative. However, it is felt that such partnership working is beneficial if it can help prevent young people coming to harm, or it may provide further information to police to assist with their risk assessment process and locating young people sooner once they were reported missing.

The results indicate that missing people travel some distance. It is recommended that information about anyone who is missing should be shared across bordering LPAs in daily officer briefings. This would help ensure that opportunities are not being lost to locate missing people if they are sighted in another area.

Shoplifting is one of the most common offences associated with missing people. As such, it is recommended that the GEN35 be amended to obtain explicit

consent for police to share descriptive information and a photo of the missing individual with businesses and shops.

There needs to be a clear policy in relation to individuals who are 'wanted' by police or the courts for an outstanding offence. There are an unknown proportion of cases amongst the dataset where someone was treated as missing as well as wanted. It was not possible to easily distinguish those who are both wanted and missing. The argument to treat such cases as missing would be the potential to cause harm to others, particularly if they are wanted for violent offences. If all wanted persons were to be treated as missing, then this will become unmanageable. At the moment, it is not clear how such decisions are made. Operationally, there are also occasions when a fear for welfare is reported to police. A fear for welfare is when someone reports a concern for the wellbeing of another and officers are despatched to check they are okay. There are examples of such incidents being prematurely converted into a missing persons investigations and when officers attend and discover that the individuals is all in order, they will then need to complete all the paperwork relating to a missing person enquiry. This takes up at least another two hours of the officer's time unnecessarily. A clear policy in relation to when a fear for welfare should be treated as a missing person, would save unnecessary bureaucracy and allow officers to be deployed to another incident sooner.

To help track the cost of missing person investigations, it is recommended that the police overtime system be updated to include Missing Persons as category of overtime.

Finally, improvements in the current Niche RMS database could be achieved in the following areas to improve accuracy and help with any future research. Presently, where someone is located and where he or she is returned to are treated the same. It is vital that these two types of locations are distinguishable if the police are to better understand where missing people go. It is recommended both these pieces of information are recorded, and not one or the other, particularly in its current manner where it is not possible to tell which out of the two types of locations it refers to. Missing records should be prevented from being closed down without a risk grading and absent records should be restricted from having a risk grading attached. The system should prevent users from setting a found and return date set in the future, as this should not be possible in real life.