

Tilley Award 2005

Application form

The following form must be completed in full. Failure to do so will result in disqualification from the competition.

Please send completed application forms to Tricia Perkins at patricia.perkins@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

All entries must be received by noon on the 29 April 2005. Entries received after that date will not be accepted under any circumstances. Any queries on the application process should be directed to Tricia Perkins on 0207 035 0262.

1. Details of application

Title of the project:

Mountains into Molehills

Name of force/agency/CDRP:

Lancashire Constabulary

Name of one contact person with position/rank (this should be one of the authors):

Inspector Neil Middleham

Email address:

neil.middleham @ lancashire.pnn.police.uk

Full postal address:

**Lancashire Constabulary
Community Safety Office,
Lancashire Police Headquarters,
Hutton,
Preston
PR4 5SB**

Telephone number:

01772 412652 Mobile 07721 912875

Fax number

01772 613562

Name of endorsing senior representatives(s)

Julia Hodson

Position and rank of endorsing senior representatives(s)

Acting Deputy Chief Constable

Full address of endorsing senior representatives(s)

**Lancashire Police Headquarters
Hutton
Preston
PR4 5SB**

2. Summary of application

In a pilot BCU this initiative reduced 'young-runaway' cases by 32.5% in its first year and is on target to reduce by a further 18% in year two. In the first quarter of 2005 the project was rolled out, leading to a force-wide reduction in 'young-runaway' cases of 27%. Lancashire police expect efficiency savings of up to £1million in 2005.

This initiative demonstrates how the police, in partnership with care providers and local authorities, have significantly reduced the incidence of children repeatedly going missing from care. The benefits are:

- Significant police efficiency savings from reduced volume of missing-person investigations.
- Reductions in crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour from breaking the cycle of 'young-runaway' behaviour.
- Mitigating the exposure of young-runaways to drug/alcohol/substance abuse and sexual exploitation.
- Reducing corporate liability for police and partners.

Lancashire Constabulary receives over 9000 missing person reports annually. Any one could end in tragedy. Investigating these cases is very resource intensive. A paper-based missing person system meant that it was not possible to conduct meaningful analysis. This initiative, therefore, involved the creation of the most advanced computerised missing person case management system in the country. It also included an extensive literature review and problem profiles prepared by intelligence analysts. Over 3000 of all missing person cases involved **repeat** runaways from care, with individual children going missing up to 78 times annually. In one year, six children were:

- Subject of 201 'missing' investigations
- Arrested 78 times
- Formally dealt with for 60 offences
- Victims of 9 violent offences
- Involved in 2 firearms incidents
- Misusing drugs/alcohol
- Sexually exploited

This is just what the police knew about!

Moreover, some care homes were reporting nearly 200 'young-runaway' cases a year. Each case involved the police, on average, in over 20 separate tasks and cost over £1000. It was felt that the individuals concerned, the care homes involved, and 'honey pots' in local communities that attract young-runaways were the elements most likely to yield to a problem solving approach.

The police led multi-agency response involved the collection and sharing of data about persistent young-runaways and the care homes from which they emanated. This led to groundbreaking multi-agency tasking, coordination and performance management. Also, when any individual is reported missing for the third time a POP based intervention is commenced with partners. A 'What Works' toolkit has emerged which has helped spread good practice.

3. Description of Project

OBJECTIVES

Missing Persons have been a critical issue for the police and our communities over many years as evidenced by hundreds of academic papers, and by police and government reports. Single incident cases from single incident locations are not likely to yield to a POP approach. However many cases involve 'repeat' individuals and 'repeat' locations which appear tailor made for a POP approach. The overwhelming majority of repeat cases involve children in care or on the fringes of the care system. These young-runaways cause multiple problems for the police and communities and suffer themselves from exploitation and exposure to harmful influences.

The objective for 'Mountains into Molehills' is to reduce the incidence of children repeatedly going missing from care.

Such cases are now tracked by Lancashire's Computerised Missing Person Case Management system and performance against that objective is monitored at quarterly intervals across all BCU's and at a force Level.

The benefits of success are as follows:

Policing Resources- Efficiency Savings.

Lancashire Constabulary commits millions of pounds worth of resources to over 9000 missing person reports that it receives each year. Dealing with such cases involves the police in receiving, recording and circulating relevant information. The majority of reports result in detailed and expensive investigations involving, on average, a further 20 investigative tasks. The average cost of investigating a missing person case is £1000.

Operational officers often complained of feeling overwhelmed by the demands of missing person investigations and of being thwarted, by such demands, in their attempts to address crime and disorder in their communities. They cited repeatedly having to investigate missing person reports relating to the same individuals from the same care establishments as a particular frustration.

Reducing Crime and Disorder.

National and local research shows that 'young-runaways,' while missing, add significantly to crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour problems in communities.

Reducing the Potential for Social Exclusion.

The 'young-runaways' themselves also suffer personally from high levels of exposure to crime, sexual exploitation, drug, alcohol and substance abuse. While 'on the run' they are very vulnerable to a range of predatory influences. Professionals often refer to these children as being 'streetwise kids' as though this somehow protects them from harm. In fact, these children tend to be very poor at making assessments of risk and repeatedly place themselves in dangerous high-risk situations. They often end up in a spiral of decline from which they may never recover. This can then lead to a lifetime of social exclusion thereby increasing the burden on communities.

Reducing Corporate Risk.

Each missing person case has the potential for a tragic outcome and for scrutiny of the police response by way of public enquiry and media frenzy.

At the outset of our scanning process, local authority children's care homes and private children's care homes were consulted about the nature and scale of the problem. Albeit reluctantly, they confirmed our understanding of the problem. However they were unable to provide consistent and detailed data to inform the process. This consultation reaffirmed much of our own scanning process but also highlighted that we were likely to meet with some cultural resistance and fatalistic attitudes in our attempts to address the problem.

Nationally, other police forces face identical issues.

Definition

We needed to test the information we believed to be true from the scanning process.

We conducted an extensive literature review of academic, police and other agency sources on the subject. We also set up a working party to identify good practice elsewhere in police forces and other agencies.

We developed a computerised system for the recording and management of missing person cases by the Lancashire Constabulary. This involved many hours of design and development. It was carried out in our own time and in a limited amount of downtime squeezed out of our standard patrolling day. We then piloted and improved the system before rolling it out to the whole force, together with a training package. Other forces have since adopted the system or parts of it. We had to wait several months for the system to acquire a bank of data before commencing the analysis. This provided an opportunity to conduct detailed analysis of the problem, which was simply not possible with the old paper based system.

We also analysed data held by other agencies. However, we found that it had not been collected in a standard way and it tended to be incomplete and unreliable.

Intelligence analysts produced 'problem profiles'. The headline finding was that around 3200 Lancashire missing person cases a year relate to people had been missing on at least three occasions. The vast majority of these emanated from a relatively small number of care establishments; primarily children's care homes. The analysis also highlighted several individual young people from care homes who were prolific 'young-runaways'. One had been reported missing 90 times in 19 months and another 78 times in 12 months. As a result we programmed our computer system to highlight and track those individuals who had been missing more than twice. A basic model of performance management was beginning to emerge. This model was to focus activity on the areas most likely to yield to a POP approach.

We refined our approach to look in detail at factors such as age, gender, location, time, weekdays and months in which people go missing. Some interesting findings emerged such an unexpected peak in children missing from care during the autumn months. These were all fed in to the process to inform our response. It became clear to us that a 'one size fits all' approach to our problem solving was not likely to succeed, particularly at a tactical level.

We also gained an understanding of the various push and pull factors which lead to missing incidences. For example 'push' factors could include bullying or abuse within a particular care establishment whereas 'pull' factors could include the attraction to alcohol, substance misuse, criminality or sex in the community, often at permissive 'honey pot' addresses where young-runaways are repeatedly harboured.

Furthermore, we learned the extent to which young-runaways engaged in crime and disorder. Six of the most frequent runaways – one from each BCU - were profiled. In one year they were:

- Subject of 201 'missing' investigations
- Arrested 78 times
- Formally dealt with for 60 offences
- Victims of 9 violent offences
- Involved in 2 firearms incidents
- Misusing drugs
- Sexually exploited

This is just what the police knew about.

Furthermore, profiling of the problem of sexual exploitation of children and young persons in Lancashire has highlighted the targeting and abuse of female young-runaways aged between 12 and 16 years of age. This profile identified how those involved in networks of abuse target these girls, often in a systematic way. Provided with

fleeting affection and alcohol they form superficial relationships with local men but are then abused in premises where they are required to perform sexual services for many men. The girls do not see themselves as victims and do not report the matter to the police. Instead they often recruit their friends to accompany them on these ventures of abuse.

This important area does not form part of national performance framework for the police or for local authorities. Consequently, the problem was simply being allowed to exist without any attempt at intervention. Prior to our data and intervention neither the local authorities, the care homes or the police were sighted on the problem.

Moreover, we uncovered an issue which we labelled, 'CAUSE –V- BURDEN'. The root cause for some 'young-runaway' behaviour lies within the care establishments themselves. The police alone had little or no influence over these internal causative factors. However, the problems created, although massive for the police, for the community and for the children, were not seen by the staff in those establishments as a particular problem for them. If a person went missing staff just rang the police and waited for officers to return the missing person – sometimes hours later - sometimes days. The police bore the costs, the responsibility and the risks of dealing with the problem. The community bore the problems of increased levels of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour. The staff and the management of the establishments had little appreciation of the inordinate lengths to which the police went to investigate and resolve these cases or of all the subsequent adverse effects. Meanwhile they were spared the responsibility and workload of looking after the individual for the duration of the missing episode. There was little enthusiasm to address the problem and even less belief that anything effective could be done.

The police, lumbered with all the problems largely created by other agencies, were simply allowing this state of affairs to continue. There was no requirement, or even encouragement, for local beat officers to work with care establishments to address the problem. There was no organised attempt to introduce a POP approach to this area of work in spite of a problem analysis triangle (repeat young-runaways – repeat locations- repeat 'honey pots') that screamed out for such an approach. There was no strategic alliance with the organisations that operated the demand driving establishments; there was no widespread multi-agency or partnership work being conducted; there was no performance management of the problem where people were held to account for the volume of missing reports emanating from their establishments.

We were encouraged by anecdotal evidence of historic, occasional and sporadic police led initiatives whereby individual motivated officers had targeted specific demand driving establishments in isolation, formed an informal partnership with staff and tried to change attitudes and practice. These personality-based initiatives had been very successful, albeit short lived. Typically, the problem would re-emerge when the motivated individual moved on or became frustrated at the lack of any strategic framework, organisational support or recognition.

Our emerging goal was to develop a system based upon our analysis which would produce sustainable reductions in repeat 'young-runaway' cases with all the associated benefits of releasing police resources to concentrate on crime and disorder, reducing that element of crime and disorder which was related to 'young-runaways' and helping vulnerable individuals to fulfill their potential.

RESPONSE

To manage the problem internally a 'missing person' champion has been appointed within each BCU. All such champions are of Chief Inspector rank and are assisted by a deputy, usually of Inspector Rank. The Assistant Chief Constable (Operations) now chairs a quarterly meeting of Missing Person Champions to manage performance, drive activity and spread good practice.

Externally, a Strategic Core Group of Partners including The Assistant Chief Constable, The Director's of Children's Services (local authorities) and The Chief Executive of the NHS Trust has been established to manage a multi-agency response to this specific problem at a strategic level.

The computer system has been developed to provide accurate, timely, consistent and reliable data, which is now used internally at local performance review and Missing Person Champions meetings and is shared with partner organisations.

In each BCU the Missing Person Champion also chairs a quarterly meeting. Each demand driving care establishment is identified within the BCU. The directors or senior managers from each establishment attend the meeting.

Previously they had not been aware of the nature, size and consequences of the problem. We invited them to view the computerised system, to understand the massive resource implications for the police, the impact on our communities and the risks involved to the young people in their care. Then we detailed the high incidence of 'young runaway' reports from their establishments. The aim of these meetings is to share the data, manage performance, drive activity and spread best practice. This approach has helped to address the 'repeat location' issue from the problem analysis triangle.

BCU's also appointed local officers as liaison officers to care homes and here officers were tasked with making POP interventions with partners as soon as a person had been reported missing on three occasions. This policy of, 'Three strikes and you are in' has addressed the individual repeat young-runaway point of the problem analysis triangle. Moreover these local officers, under the direction of BCU Missing Person Champions are responsible for the identification of 'honey pots' and appropriate disruption or intervention tactics.

Initially the POP was piloted in one BCU but following on from its success it has now been rolled out County Wide.

Responses are multi-faceted and the quality assurance template, shown below, has been developed to ensure consistent transferability and sustainability of the POP;

Quality Assurance Checklist – Mountains into Molehills

Analysis

- Does the division produce a quarterly analysis of missing persons within the division?
- Does an intelligence analyst do this analysis?
- Does it take account of CRS and Sleuth missing person data?
- Does it highlight frequent missing persons and frequent locations within the division?
- Does it include detailed profiles of regular missing persons and links to: crime; victimisation; prostitution; sexual exploitation; substance abuse; and anti-social behaviour?
- Is the analysis used to drive activity?
- Is it kept for audit purposes?

Interventions

- Has a person within the division been made responsible for monitoring frequent missing person data on a daily or near daily basis?
- Does that responsible person task others in the division to intervene immediately upon a person having gone missing on three times within the previous 90 days?
- Has the division identified staff members around the division who are capable of making effective interventions on behalf of the responsible person?
- Does the responsible person intervene personally when the number of missing incidents has reached a certain higher level; say 6 incidents within 90 days?
- Has an upper threshold of missing incidents in a 90 day period been set, over which the SMT will get involved in interventions?
- Has the division effectively identified and targeted 'honey pot' locations in the community, which repeatedly provide refuge to young-runaways?

Tasking meetings

- Are meetings held and attended by all demand driving establishments?
- Do the senior managers/directors of all such establishments attend?
- Are the meetings held on at least a quarterly basis?
- Are the meetings driven by the analysts report?
- Have the division made any use of The Commission for care standards inspection unit in respect of poorly performing establishments?
- Are the meetings minuted for audit purposes?

Protocols

- Does the division have a protocol with the Local Authority governing how persons missing from care will be

dealt with?

- Does the division have a similar protocol with local hospitals?
- Does the division have a similar protocol with all private care homes that the analysis shows drive demand in respect of missing persons?
- Can the division produce electronic copies of such protocols?

Multi-agency approach

- Have the division integrated missing person reduction work with Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, Group Intervention Panels, Child and adolescent Mental Health Services, Youth offending Teams, and Area Child Protection Committees?
- Has the division made any appropriate referrals to the Young Runaways project?

Return interviews

- Has the division identified a named individual responsible for return interviews in respect of each demand-driving establishment?
- Has a person within the division been made responsible for monitoring return interview compliance on a daily or near daily basis?
- Is there an effective route within the division for other agencies return interviews to follow?
- Do completed return interviews get speedy input onto computer?
- Does the division have clear guidelines and procedures for ensuring that when return interviews highlight issues requiring police action, that appropriate action is taken?

Training

- Has the division carried out any training for the officers who are tasked with making interventions once a person has been missing 3 times?
- Has the division carried out any joint training for police staff and workers from care homes?

Reward Schemes

- Has the division successfully encouraged effective reward schemes in those establishments that drive missing person demand?

Bail Conditions

- Are custody sergeants in the division aware of the identity of the repeat missing persons in the division? This is so that they can be alive to the possibility of curtailing missing person behaviour as a way of addressing offending behaviour when drafting bail conditions.
- Are there any examples within the division of the above being successfully implemented?
- Are custody officers aware the benefit of bail conditions that require a person in care to comply with the rules of the establishment at which they reside?

ASBO's/ABC's

- Have the division considered cross-referencing repeat missing persons with those that are being targeted for ASBO's and ABC's in an attempt to use these to assist addressing missing person behaviour?

Tasking

- To what extent have the division built repeat missing person into tasking and coordination at the various levels of Tasking and coordination in the division?

A 'What Works' Toolkit has also been developed to assist practitioners to understand the approaches that have been found to work in effectively addressing young-runaway behaviour:

EVALUATION

In the first year following the computerisation on 01/07/02, Lancashire Constabulary collected some baseline data on frequent missing person cases. The response of this POP initiative commenced on 01/07/03 in one BCU. In the first year of the POP the pilot BCU reduced the incidence of frequent young-runaway cases from 508 to 343 (32%

reduction). The rest of the force was used as a control sample and experienced a rise from 2732 frequent young-runaway cases in the baseline year to 2937 cases in the pilot year, an increase of 7.5%. The pilot BCU also achieved a reduction in the number of young-runaways going missing more than 10 times in the year, from 14 in the baseline year to only 8 in the pilot year. The top repeat 'young-runaway' in the baseline year had been missing on 70 occasions, while in the pilot year the top case involved only 18 episodes. This represented a significant achievement. In resource cost savings this BCU alone saved over £150,000 on the cost of investigating repeat cases.

We are now in the second year of performance management in the pilot BCU area. However, performance data for this period only extends from 01/07/04 to 20/04/05 (date of this report). In this period the pilot BCU has further reduced frequent young-runaways to 217 cases from 264 in the corresponding period 12 months earlier. This represents a further decrease of 18% on the previous years 32% reduction.

In late 2004 all BCU's in the force were asked to prepare to roll out 'Mountains into Molehills'. The initiative was introduced formally across the Force on 01/01/05. In the first quarter the force showed a reduction from 683 cases in 2004 to 497 (27%) cases in 2005. Moreover a reduction in the number of children going missing more than 10 times in the quarter fell from 16 to 8. The top repeat 'young-runaway' in that quarter in 2004 had been missing on 39 occasions. This was reduced in 2005 to only 19 episodes. If the force are able to maintain this performance (27% reduction) over the whole of 2005 this will lead to efficiency savings of £873,000, on the costs of investigating repeat cases. If the force are able to achieve the levels of reduction achieved in the pilot BCU in the first year (32%) the savings will amount to £1, 034,000.

Every case dealt with by the police and partners adds to the corporate risk arising from scrutiny that follows a tragic outcome. Accordingly, a significant reduction in case numbers also reduces the corporate risk to police and partners.

Establishing the extent of reductions in crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour resulting directly from this initiative is much more difficult. The pilot BCU's comparative performance in crime and disorder rates throughout the pilot period was very good. Anecdotal evidence and limited case studies suggest that the initiative made a contribution to this achievement. However, there are a multitude of factors influencing crime and disorder rates. Therefore, to some extent we are left to make instinctive judgments and conclusions on this point. One reasonable conclusion is that children in care are less likely to commit crime, disorder and place themselves in dangerous situations when they are operating stable lifestyles within the care system rather than when leading a feral existence in a society awash with predatory and exploitative influences.

The evaluation of this POP has been and remains ongoing. The SARA model is used repeatedly to continually refine our approach. There are many examples of this. One early example was the use of joint protocols with other agencies to try to manage the incidence of young-runaways. During the pilot period, the force developed protocols with other agencies designed, amongst other things, to encourage care home staff to take more responsibility for solving low risk cases themselves in the early hours of an absence without reference to the police. This response was introduced across the whole force and the data was monitored thereafter. The protocols helped to professionalise investigations and make clear the division of responsibilities between the police and the care homes. However, they appeared to have no effect in reducing young-runaway volumes. On the Contrary, those areas not operating the 'Mountains into Molehills' POP continued to show increases in the volumes of young-runaways.

One particular area of difficulty has been a lack of engagement by some care homes. In the pilot BCU pilot where all other care homes embraced the initiative, delivered reductions in young-runaway case volumes and introduced initiatives such as reward schemes, one home consistently declined to act and young-runaway rates remained high. Their sole argument seemed to be, 'Its not our fault they run and we cannot lock them up!' Leverage utilizing the Care Homes Inspectorate seemed to promote a change in attitude. Subsequently, this home has become one of the most enthusiastic partners, embracing good practice and volunteering to try new ideas.

Some individual cases have proved particularly intractable and have ended up with the young people being moved to new care placements away from 'honey pots' and other community or peer pull factors. However, we do not consider these to be illegitimate approaches to problem solving. When such moves have been necessary the new placement is always monitored to establish how successful it has been in addressing repeat young-runaway behaviour. However, some such moves have proved very successful in disrupting young-runaway behaviour and it's associated adverse consequences.

Inspector Neil Middleham/Acting Inspector Astrid Robinson.

