Lost and Found

Reducing the numbers of Missing From Home Investigations by targeting repeat locations and working with high demand subjects.

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Summary

Word Count 355

Scanning

The scanning uses data from Greater Manchester Police Cognos system to look at the problem of repeat missing from home known as MFH. The data demonstrates that carehomes are responsible for 5043 missing investigation of the total 33,970 investigations that year which given the amount of carehomes across the Greater Manchester area puts them second only to hospitals in terms of MFH demand. The data also provides information regarding repeat missings which Greater Manchester Police suffer a great amount of.

The top ten care homes equated to 13% of all missing from home investigations from care homes and the top ten missing children, who all lived in care homes equated to 9% of all demand from carehomes.

Analysis

The analysis section uses an altered problem analysis triangle to identify pinch points to explore for intervention. It looks at the concept of the power few in relation to both care home locations and also repeat missing children. Care homes not completing all relevant checks before reporting persons as missing was highlighted as a significant pinch point. The missing person themselves within this setting are often young and having suffered adverse childhood experiences or strain. It looks at the academic research into missing from homes and repeat locations. It looks at the impact that ACES have on a child going missing and looks at suggestions nationally from tackling underperforming care homes with the supercontroller.

The objective was to create a POP plan for the top ten carehomes with a view of causing force wide reductions in missings.

Response

The response focuses around the pinch points highlighted into the response for intervention. The 25 situational crime prevention techniques were used in the response around working with repeat locations and enforcement of policies. In addition to focusing around repeat missing subjects and coming up with a holistic approach encouraging partners to take the lead.

Assessment

The assessment shows that the objective was met in terms of reducing MFH investigations from care homes which were reduced by 19.6% meaning a reduction 1,543 MFH investigations in care homes, the cost would be £4,590,425. Taking off staffing, there is an economic cost saving of £3,950,425.

Description

Word Count 3895

Scanning

National Picture

The problem of people going missing is an issue that faces all forces within England and Wales, the National Crime Agency collates information into an annual report. For the data period that we are looking at of 2021-2022, there were 330,571 calls to police across England and Wales in relation to missing people. This led to 294,220 missing persons incidents being created across England and Wales. Please note that not all police forces returned data packages and for this return only 27 forces returned details on this so the amount is clearly much higher.

Estimates from the College of Policing (2015)[1] suggest that the police devote upwards of 3 million 'investigation hours' per year to missing persons reports in the UK. Since the average cost per investigation is thought to range from £1,870 (NCA, 2014) to £2,415[2] (Shalev, Greene, and Pakes, 2013), this equates to a total annual cost of between £394 million and £509 million. Greater Manchester Combined authority estimated that the average missing person investigation costs £2975 for Greater Manchester Police.

Local picture

In terms of locally to Greater Manchester Police, in the year November 21 to October 22 there were 33, 870 missing persons events created across the 10 districts. This was a 15.42% increase on the previous year of November 20- October 21 which had 29,345 missing from home events created across that year period. For a population size of 2,770,000, this considers that per 1000 population there is 12.2 events. The average across England and Wales for the same period is 5.5 events according to the National crime agencies report. In terms of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority estimated cost of an average missing person investigated which would cost the police £2975 per investigation, with 33,870 missing

[1] Missing persons | College of Policing

[2] Shalev Greene, K. and Pakes, F., 2014. The cost of missing person investigations: Implications for current debates. *Policing: a journal of policy and practice*, *8*(1), pp.27-34.

person events this would cost the force an estimated £100, 674, 000 for the period that we are considering.

Data from GMP

Below is this data broken down across the year period and as you can see from each of the data sets, there is a seasonal demand trend that is evident here with peaks evident within the summer months and lower figures of missing people events. To put this into context this meant that during the period of our scanning period which is November 2021 to October 2022, there was on average 92 missing people events per day for officers to investigate across Greater Manchester Police force area.

It is clear that Greater Manchester Police do have a high level of demand comparatively to the national picture around missing people. So the question is, how can this be effectively tackled?

Lawrence Sherman introduced the concept of the power few phenomenon and this is the argument that there are clusters in demand so for example a small number of locations will be responsible for a large amount of crime. This has been backed up by academic research across decades with the work by Weisburd found in his study that 4% of locations accounted for half of crime. Martinez furthered this by looking at offenders and found that 10% of the offenders in his study was responsible for 40% of all crime. O et al found that 5% of victims in his study were linked to 60% of all victimisations. Lawrence Sherman suggested that by allocating the resources to tackling the "vital few", you could reduce overall harm and demand.

The data period of Nov 21 to Oct 22 had 13, 411 investigations where people went missing from residential home, 7860 where the missing location was a care home[3], 6119 from hospitals and 7683 from other locations. When considering the amount of care homes compared to the amount of residential homes so to put it in the national context, there are 3119 registered carehomes for children in England currently[4]. There are significantly more missings reported, on average, from a care home than a home.

[3] A care home is a housing facility provided either by the local authority or private which houses children and it is staff that are employed to care for children and not a foster carer/family.

[4] Main findings: children's social care in England 2023 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

There currently aren't available figures to document how many care homes there are within the Greater Manchester area. Together the top ten locations equate for 1050 missing investigations which represents 13% of the overall demand coming from care homes. The top ten missing children all live in care homes and are responsible for 717 missing investigations and 9% of overall demand from care homes for missing persons investigations.

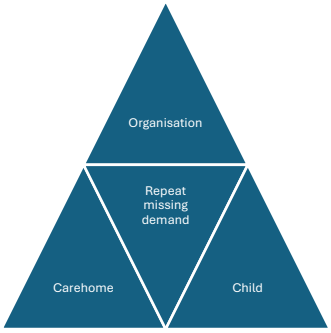
This data cluster would represent an opportunity looking at the power few where 6% of the overall missing from care homes. The age range that report missing the most are those aged between 15-17 years old.

Objective to put problem solving plans around high demand locations and subjects on each of the districts across Greater Manchester policing area.

Word count 852

Analysis

An altered version of the problem analysis triangle focusing on motivated repeat missing, GMP and Care home is more appropriate than a traditional PAT triangle.



Care homes

In respect of children, the key question to consider when determining whether it is appropriate to contact the police is 'what would a reasonable parent do in these circumstances?'

The College of Policing Authorised Professional Practise (APP)[5] states that '*The police are entitled to expect parents and carers, including staff acting in a parenting role in care homes, to accept normal parenting responsibilities and undertake reasonable actions to try and establish the whereabouts of the individual.*'

The police are therefore entitled to expect parents and carers to undertake those reasonable actions before contacting the police unless there is concern for the immediate safety of the child or another person that justifies immediate police intervention. Greater Manchester Combined Authority introduced Greater Manchester Runaway and Missing from Home and Care Protocol (RMFHC). This included 7 checks that must be made by carers prior to reporting the child as missing. It was found that in many cases involving children reporting as missing from care homes that these checks were not being done. This offered a pinch point for GMP as an opportunity for intervention. Particularly as many children returned home of their own volition and without harm.

[5] Missing persons | College of Policing

Furthermore research has found that contact with the justice system is more likely to promote future offending. Unnecessary contact with children through the police can lead to stigmatisation, thus contributing to a process of criminalisation[6]. So it is best practice all round to ensure that police are not being called out unnecessarily.

Careful consideration needs to be given to children under the age of 18 who may be at risk of exploitation.[7] .

Sherman introduced the concept of the 'Power few' in 2007[8]. He described the power few as '*a small percentage of offenders are responsible for a high percentage of harm'* which mirrors our data above in the scanning where ten care homes represent 13% of overall demand. The power few may be the cases that are most difficult to solve because they have so many simultaneous or "co-morbid" problems[9]. Being realistic it is not worth expecting to completely wipe out demand from carehomes but there is an opportunity to reduce this demand on police particularly in cases of inappropriate reporting where all checks have not been completed in the absence of risk factors that would override the need for this or where the person was absent rather than missing.

Huey, Ferguson and Kowalski (2019)[10] found in their research on *'The "power few" of missing persons' cases'* tested the "power few" concept in relation to missing persons and the locations from which they are reported missing. They identified the top five locations from which adults and youth repeatedly go missing and to determine to what extent these locations account for the overall volume of missing cases. They found that;

- targeting these top five locations for adults and youths could reduce the volume of repeat missing cases by 68.6% for youths,
- missing rate for going missing 63.2%

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[6] Motz, R.T., Barnes, J.C., Caspi, A., Arseneault, L., Cullen, F.T., Houts, R., Wertz, J. and Moffitt, T.E., 2020. Does contact with the justice system deter or promote future delinquency? Results from a longitudinal study of British adolescent twins. *Criminology*, *58*(2), pp.307-335.

[7] Vulnerability and violent crime interventions | College of Policing

[8] *Sherman, 2007. The power few: experimental criminology and the reduction of harm. Journal of Experimental Criminology volume 3, pages 299–321*

[9] *Sherman, 2007. The power few: experimental criminology and the reduction of harm. Journal of Experimental Criminology volume 3, pages 299–321*

[10] Huey, L., Ferguson, L. and Kowalski, L., 2020. The "power few" of missing persons' cases. *Policing: an international journal*, *43*(2), pp.360-374.

- youths go missing 3–10 times on average[11].

Hayden and Shalev Greene (2018)[12] found similar results in England and Wales which is another pinch point for GMP to explore.

Child

Thomas & Ferguson's[13] research demonstrated there was evidence of the power few hypothesis, with the habitual/chronic cases constituting 17% of the cases and over 60% of the missing person reports across 10 years.

Eleven per cent of the looked-after children population go missing every year, with 65% of these children going missing more than once[14]. The 11,530 children who had a missing incident had a total of 70,250 missing incidents in the year to 31st March 2018, an average of 6.1 missing incidents per looked after child who went missing.[15]. Our data in GMP shows that the top ten missing children across the scanning period shows they are responsible for 717 missing investigations so on average are responsible for 71 missing person investigations each but in real terms ranges from 99 investigations to 63 investigations.

We understand from qualitative data that each of our top ten missing children suffer from adverse childhood experiences. Agnew[16] suggested in his strain theory that repeated exposure to strain or adverse childhood experiences will increase the likelihood of anti social behaviour types which would include going missing. Maternal deprivation is also key as is neglect in terms of how the brain develops over time, work by Perry[17] that the brain develops very differently in neglected children. The brain governs our responses including emotional responses and our decision making. Should you have a differently developed brain due to neglect, coupled with the changes that your brain makes during puberty where

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[11] Huey, L., Ferguson, L. and Kowalski, L., 2020. The "power few" of missing persons' cases. *Policing: an international journal*, *43*(2), pp.360-374.
[12] Hayden, C., & Shalev-Greene, K. (2018). The blue light social services? Responding to repeat reports to the police of people missing from institutional locations. *Policing and Society*, *28*(1), 45–61. https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2016.1138475
[13] Stuart D M Thomas, Lorna Ferguson, The power few missing persons: A 10-year follow-up study of over 2,000 youth missing persons, *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, Volume 17, 2023, paac084,
[14] DfE, 2015
[15] Coram-i - Missing looked after children
[16] Agnew, R., 2012. Reflection on "A revised strain theory of delinquency". *Social forces*, *91*(1), pp.33-38.
[17] Perry, B.D. and Pollard, R., 1997, October. Altered brain development following global neglect in early childhood. In *Proceedings from the Society for Neuroscience Annual Meeting (New Orleans)*.

40% of brain synapses in the frontal cortex are eliminated[18] in an almost factory update to prepare itself for adult life. Brain reaches full development at age 25, the amydala which governs emotional responses is much smaller and develops at a faster rate than the frontal lobe which governs decision making[19] so the teenage brain is more governed by emotional responses than rational decision making.

Harlow and Zimmermans[20] study using a monkey demonstrated that the maternally deprived monkey would choose physical warmth and attention over food which contradicts Maslow's hierarchy of needs and it demonstrates the need for social interactions over meeting physical needs such as food. The regular missings are arguably demonstrating something similar arguably in that they are rejecting shelter for social interaction with peers or worse those wanting to take advantage of children. Appropriate interventions and diversions were not being set up or had been rejected by the child out of hand and no follow up around alternatives had been discussed.

GMP

As this was prior to the introduction of right care, right person, GMP at the time had not challenged carehomes reporting for some time and not enforced any of the policies around appropriate checks being completed. No feedback was given around the appropriateness of the calls alongside the calls not being challenged at the entry point with the call handler. In austerity, cuts to public services meant it was difficult to carry out a lot of these checks due to being short staffed and this demand was pushed towards police. This offers a pinch point for GMP to explore in relation to this matter.

Chief Inspector Alan Rhees-Cooper[21] highlights that the next steps for the Police are to:

- Work with Ofsted to regulate those currently unregulated accommodation providers who are doing a good job and raise standards.
- Close those unregulated accommodation providers who are providing poor care or are in completely unsuitable locations.

[18] The adolescent brain: Beyond raging hormones - Harvard Health
[19] What's Going On in the Teenage Brain? - HealthyChildren.org
[20] Hansen, E.W., 1966. The development of maternal and infant behavior in the rhesus monkey. *Behaviour*, pp.107-149.
[21] Staff Officer to NPCC Lead for Missing People at the National Missing from Care Conference on the 25/2/20

Word count 1421

Response

Starting in November 2022, the SARA model was utilised for each of the top care homes and also missing persons, the SARA model is not a linear process and the scanning and analysis was revisited on occasion following an interim assessment each 3 months to determine how well the intervention has been.
Each intervention utilised the 25 situational crime prevention techniques.

Firstly district officers would meet with top ten care homes in order to discuss the demand and mutually assess how best to move forward and reduce the demand. A co-produced response to the problem was created. This was to set rules around what constituted a missing person and to follow their own internal policies. This was also done to avoid disputes.

Secondly ensure that the Greater Manchester Runaway and Missing from Home and Care Protocol (RMFHC) was being following which was highlighted as a pinch point in the analysis. Specifically considering the list of checks made. The full details of the checks can be found in appendix 1.
This was reduce frustrations and stress and avoid disputes and it was highlighted in the analysis that these checks were not being completed which offered a pinch point for police.

Thirdly districts worked closely with their aligned MSPO; Missing Persons Support Officers who have a close link to OFSTED and Local Authority to determine how to reduce demand at repeat locations which

would include looking at the demand, highlighting where checks were not being carried out or inappropriate reports were being made or even if the care home was not meeting the needs of the child. This would be reflected back to the home to setting rules and determining place managers.
This can include requesting an OFSTED investigation where the level of care being provided to the young person is falling below what is expected as highlighted by CI Rhees-Cooper in the analysis. The highlighting of this information to OFSTED is key as it was being found that OFSTED did not have a clear picture around the demand as they are supercontrollers and have the ability to enact real change.

MSPOs could sit on local authority childrens services meetings which discussed and challenge high repeat missing child being placed at a location which had high repeat missing investigation. This was done to control access to the carehome.

Changes made to the environments of the care homes are suggested as moving staff office to near front door or walk arounds at peak MFH demand times to ensure that challenges are being made at exit points. This is done to screen exits.

Better training for staff around carehome policies. Meetings to be set up with both locations and demand discussions to take place, this is to offer more transparency and support moving forward. Again this was done to avoid disputes.Philomena protocols are carried out to aid finding the individual as soon as possible. To ensure that the care home keeps these as up to date as possible.
Target Harden by properly trained staff at FCC and MFH Sgt level to ensure that challenge processes are in place, this would involve a call back to the person reporting to discuss the person and whether they should be reported as missing. Staff trained through Op Madision and the refresh of the Philomena protocol will mean that staff will have knowledge around the responsibilities of carehomes and can challenge on this.

Assist compliance through meetings to be held with the carehome, SLT and NBO level to challenge incoming demand on a regular basis. Highlighting inappropriate reporting and demonstrating good reporting practices will assist the care home in recognising areas where they could improve as although

highlighted in the analysis that we would not expect demand to be zero, there is a pinch point particularly around the top ten demand generators in this area to make reductions.

Subject

Individual needs assessments to determine the suitability of the home and care package for that individual as highlighted as a pinch point in the analysis. Understanding whether the home fits the emotional, physical and mental needs of the child is important to determining whether the child will thrive in the setting. This was to address concerns raised in the analysis stage that homes were not addressing the needs of the children and that children with enhanced needs were being placed in homes ill equipped for their needs due to enhanced funding provision available. This again was done to control access and also reduce frustration and stress.

More appropriate curfews for example having a later curfew than 2030hrs for someone aged 17 years old. This was again done to reduce frustration and stress and avoid ongoing disputes where a 17 would not abide by this curfew feeling it was too onerous in comparison to other 17 year olds her age and felt she was being punished for being in care.

Intervention and diversions to be considered taking into account the individuals needs in order to reduce temptation and arousal to go missing. Counselling should also be considered to work on ACES taking into account the analysis into this. Police to work with social services to encourage them to offer these diversions and put a tailored response into place. As stated in the analysis, it should be encourage for partner agencies to take the lead with this due to potentially criminalising those going missing. This was also done to encourage the social worker to extend more guardianship over the child.

Neutralise peer pressure by considering separating children that regularly go missing together particularly where it is evident one is being led astray by the other.

Word Count 934

Assessment

Demand reduction

The intervention period period of November 2022 to October 2023, there was a reduction of 5,854 missing from home investigation in comparison to the scanning period which had 35, 682 reduced to 29,828. This was a reduction of 16.4% from our scanning year to our intervention yeah and is considered to be a statistically significant change.

This was compared to other forces to establish whether this was part of a regional change and whether external factors were at play. Benchmarking requests were put into Merseyside Police, Lancashire police and West Yorkshire police. Although they were smaller forces, our request centred around whether they had seen a change in missing from home investigation numbers from our scanning year to our intervention year. Merseyside Police reported a small increase of 163 missing from home investigations in the intervention year when compared to the scanning period. Lancashire Police also showed an increase of 663 in the intervention period when comparing their numbers in the scanning period and West Yorkshire Police had a small reduction of 57 missing person investigations during the intervention period in comparison to the numbers of investigations during our scanning period.

So in comparison to other forces, Greater Manchester Police has experienced a significant reduction whereas other forces haven't experienced the same reduction so external environment in policing or changes to policy can be ruled out. This was also prior to the implementation of right care, right person.

The figures from locations during the intervention period were also broken down with -10.5% reduction in people going missing from their residential homes dropping to 12007, those missing from care home reduced to 6317 which is a reduction of 19.6%. People missing from hospital reduced from 6119 to 4687 which is a reduction of 23.4%.

Objective has been met around reducing the amount of missing from home investigations in care home setting and this accounting for reductions across the force.

The reductions were broken down by districts and a consistent reduction across each of the districts was evident.

Economic cost saving analysis

As stated in the scanning the cost of MFH investigation has been estimated by GMCA to cost £2975 per investigation. At a reduction of 1,543 MFH investigations in care homes, the cost would be £4,590,425. The cost of staffing on this at a PC rate full time for a year for each of the districts would be £480,000 and the costs of the MSPO would be approximately 160,000. The staff did not work on this 100% of the time, however if they did, this still £3,950,425 in economic cost saving for the year.

Sustainability

The period which the assessment covers is over a year and the figures have not rebounded. It has also been assessed recently and again this is showing to be a sustainable result. Further plans in Greater Manchester Police are to enact Right Care Right Person which should lead to further reductions in this area.

Replication

A similar approach has been adopted with the hospitals around challenging demand with hospital staff and through bi weekly meetings and challenging them to use their own protocols and policies, in addition to training staff which has led to reductions in hospital missing reports by 23.4% as seen above in figure 7 meaning a reduction of 1,432 missing investigations.

Displacement

As the vast majority of the regular missing identified in this project stayed within the force area, it was easy to track displacement and there was little displacement identified as the subject individual POP plan followed them around. There was follow up with those moved out of force as part of the closure final assessment of the POP plan and this again was seen to have little displacement as the reason for the move was often as the premises was more suitable for the child's needs.

Lessons moving forward

This project is at a 2 on the Maryland scale[22], if I was to do this again I would randomly assign locations for treatment and those for control to lift the projects to a level 5 on the Maryland scale.

Word Count 688

[22] Evaluation and review | College of Policing

Recommendation

As Head of the Crime Prevention Team at Greater Manchester Police (GMP) it is my pleasure to endorse the project and personnel involved in the problem solving project -

- **'Lost and Found:**

Inspector Natasha Bryan has been integral to GMP's development towards a Problem Solving culture. She has worked with the utmost dedication to understand the causes of problems, develop appropriate intervention and develop targeted work with the public and communities to deliver preventative measures. She has done this by creating effective partnerships with GMP's district teams and partners, to understand and reduce GMP demand by addressing underlining causes and using partnership orientated problem solving.

The problem of people going missing is an issue that faces all forces within England and Wales. Estimates from the College of Policing (2015) suggest that the police devote upwards of 3 million 'investigation hours' per year to missing persons reports in the UK. Greater Manchester Combined Authority estimated that the average missing person investigation costs on average £2975 for Greater Manchester Police.

Working across the entire force area utilising data from Greater Manchester Police Cognos system to look at the problem of repeat missing from home, the team discovered the top ten care homes equated to 13% of all missing from home investigations from care homes and the top ten missing children. The children all lived in care homes and equated to 9% of all demand from care homes. The team utilised an altered problem analysis triangle to identify pinch points to explore for intervention. The objective was to create a POP plan for the top ten care homes with a view of causing force wide reductions in missings.

The project focused on the pinch points highlighted into the response for intervention and assessment demonstrated that Missing from Home investigations from care homes were reduced by 19.6% resulting in a reduction 1,543 Missing from Home investigations in care homes, resulting in a potential economic cost saving of £3,950,425.

Natasha's ability to develop the force strategy to embed problem solving whilst upskilling the frontline and partners is critical to the continued development of Greater Manchester communities and the prevention of crime. Her work looking into the issue of Missing from Home and utilising a problem solving method has driven GMP to approach the issue in a different and effective way.

Kind regards

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Appendix

Greater Manchester Runaway and Missing from Home and Care Protocol (RMFHC) was being following which was highlighted as a pinch point in the analysis.
There are 7 checks which include:

1. **Physical checks of the child's residence or where they are meant to be, including any location the child may be hiding within the house or building.**
2. **Physical checks of any garden, garage, sheds, grounds, and surrounding area(s).**
3. **Attempting to contact the missing person directly, via mobile phone, text, or social networking sites.**
4. **Contacting the missing individual's family and friends.**
5. **If it is safe to do so, visiting locations that the child is known to frequent, or where they have previously been found if missing before.**
6. **Referring to any existing plan that may be in place for that child, which could provide information to locate the child or identify any vulnerabilities.**
7. **When all reasonable checks to locate the individual have been carried out and the child is not located, Greater Manchester Police should be contacted via 101 to report them as missing.**