

REPORT TO:	Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel 23 September 2021
SUBJECT	Missing Children
REPORT LEAD	Bev Hendricks, AD Safeguarding and Social Care
BRIEF OVERVIEW	This paper provides a description of the performance and practice involved in working with missing children and young people. It also describes actions taken to improve interventions for children and young people missing from home or care.

1 Purpose of the report

- 1.1 The report seeks to update senior leaders and Members about the work undertaken to address the vulnerabilities of children and young people who are at risk and who go missing from home or care in Haringey.

2 Overarching Principles

- 2.1 Haringey's multi agency safeguarding partners understand that children and young people who run away from home or from care are particularly vulnerable and at serious risk of harm.
- 2.2 Haringey partners and agencies have adopted the following principles in relation to identifying and locating children who go, or may be at risk of, missing from home or care:
- The safety and welfare of the child and young person is paramount.
 - Locating and returning the child to a safe environment is the main objective.
 - Child Protection Procedures will be initiated whenever there are concerns that a child who is missing may be at risk of significant harm.
 - Police will act on all missing notifications as defined by the parameters of the missing definition.
 - The completion of a full risk assessment is paramount to guide collaborative working and sharing information with the police.
 - Every 'missing' child who returns will be offered, a return to home or care interview by someone other than the direct carer.
 - Where the child is known to Children's Social Care or meets the criteria for referral to Children's Social Care, the Local Authority will ensure that there is a range of service options to address the child's needs when they return

- Preventing children from going missing can be achieved by providing effective support and interventions, including good information sharing, multi-agency assessment, planning and performance management. Intervention will include a consideration of risks for each individual child and a focus on reducing repeat missing episodes.
 - Working in partnership with children and their families is a key part of this process and children's views and concerns will be taken seriously.
- 2.3 Established partners have all have adopted the Haringey Missing policy and definitions:
- Missing - the whereabouts of the child / young person cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character, or the context suggests the person may be subject of a crime or at risk of harm to themselves or others
 - Absent - child / young person (aged 13 or over) is not at a place where they are expected or required to be - whereabouts unknown.
 - Unauthorised absent - the child's, whereabouts, are known but the child or young person is not where they are expected or required to be and their whereabouts are unknown or could be established.
- 2.4 Positive working relationships have been established with our partner agencies. These include schools, voluntary sector organisations and outreach to community spaces through Bruce Grove, who have accommodated the conduct of return home interviews (RHIs) within their respective settings.
- 2.5 Discussions with schools, health and police continue to identify concerns which are addressed in the RHI and enable the development of prevention plans.
- 2.6 Summary of achievements to date and actions to be taken:**

Below is a summary of achievements by children's social care and partners and further actions to be taken to make further improvements.

- The Missing Protocol for Haringey and its partners has been updated and was relaunched in July 2021. It highlights how we prevent and respond to children and young people at risk of missing from home or care (see appendix 1).
- The Haringey Children's Academy and the Haringey Safeguarding Children's Partnership (HSCP) is rolling out the Children at Risk of Missing from Care or Home training and the 'first chance', return home interview, training to social workers, Early Help workers, School DSL's , Housing officers, designated Faith Leaders to support the RHI (Return Home Interview) offer. This programme of training will be led by the Missing Co-ordinator, supported by the AD for Safeguarding & Social Care.
- The HSCP is developing a C&YPS Missing App- an alert and self-reporting tool for Haringey young people at risk of Missing from home or care, activating support from across the partnership for young people to self-report and request an RHI.

- Missing Co-ordinator to widen the quarterly reporting from designated partners analysing the key themes and issues in relation to children who go missing and for this to inform the wider understanding of child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation.
- Integrate with the police missing lead, the weekly missing network meetings to track and respond to concerns regarding missing young people.
- Repurpose the Family Network meetings, (FNM /FGC) to provide opportunities for children who are looked after to develop their care plans and shape their contact arrangements safely.

Collectively, partnership efforts have also seen improvements in the following areas:

- I. Recording and Compliance
- II. Management of missing and high-risk cases through the monthly Vulnerability, Violence and Exploitation Prevention Panel (VVEPP) meetings
- III. Monthly MACE meetings consider the intelligence around the problem profiling victims, offenders, locations, and themes (VOLT), mobilizing police activity in the community.
- IV. The Virtual School lead for Haringey will receive the missing daily data and will also be routinely invited to all missing strategies for looked after children. This will embed and co-ordinate the routine notifications system to include colleagues from education wherever the looked after child attends a school setting and ensure RHIs are offered at the first opportunity.

3 OVERVIEW and PROFILE

3.1 The cohort of missing children in Haringey mirrors the national picture that 99% of children and young people across Haringey who are reported to the police as missing are aged between 10 – 17. A comparative review of Haringey's Top 10 missing children reported to VVEPP indicates a concentration of young people missing from home and care from around the age of 15. Further analysis has identified the following trends for Haringey over the last year:

- i) Children Looked After (CLA), are likely to be those most **at risk** of missing
- ii) Children reported missing are likely to be involved with county lines and local lower-level drug distribution
- iii) Disproportionate percentage of young people that are reported missing are from ethnic minority communities.

3.2 Generally, the problem profile confirms that the numbers of CLA reported missing remains high amongst the 15-17 age group (see performance report below). The numbers of missing episodes represent the same cohort of young

people regarded as frequent missing persons. In short, the demand is generated from known young people.

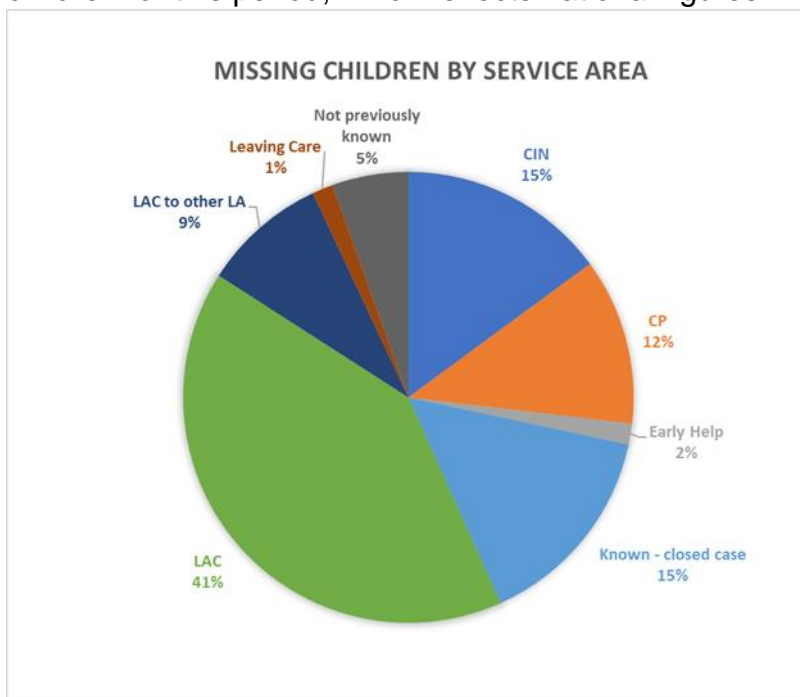
- 3.3 Haringey's police and social care performance figures for the period April 2020 – March 2021 record that the total 806 missing episodes involved 190 children over the 12-month period. This represents 82 CLA who are the responsibility of Haringey and 18 CLA who are the responsibility of other local authorities but are placed in Haringey. The remaining 90 are children missing from their family homes.
- 3.4 The police data and RHIs also allow a clearer understanding of behaviours from Haringey CLA, placed out of borough. The most frequent reason for going missing was returning to see friends and family. There are 172 young people who are looked after over the age of 15. Of the 172, 138 are placed outside of Haringey for a range of safeguarding reasons.
- 3.5 The Top 10 children and young people who were identified as having repeat missing episodes were equally split among male and female. Of the 190 children that went missing in April 2020 - March 2021 just 3% (6 children) of Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers (UASC) were reported as missing from their placement. Haringey shares this experience with other Local Authorities. The most frequent age of UASC CLA who had a missing episode was 17 years old and their most frequent ethnicity was White (Other).
- 3.6 Young people aged 15-17 are the most frequent of those who went missing. In the six months up until April 2021, there has been a sharp increase in the number of boys that went missing aged 15 compared to girls and there is an even proportion that went missing between the ages of 16 and 17. The 2020/21 data suggests Black/African/Caribbean/British are the largest cohort missing for both genders at 54%. The second largest cohort are children from White British and other ethnic backgrounds at 19%, with White females making up 27% as opposed to boys who are at 14%. This is generally low for boys compared to the overall number of children in LAC at 29% suggesting white boys were less likely to go missing.
- 3.7 Black Caribbean females are the single largest cohort of missing at 12%, closely followed by White British females at 10%. Black Caribbean for the boys is also the highest missing cohort at 19% compared to White British boys which is low at 5%. Generally Black/African/Caribbean/British form the highest missing children at 54%. The figure for White children is 19%, Mixed at 17% and Asian 6%. The ethnic breakdown of missing children is highly diverse, mirroring Haringey's youth population.
- 3.8 The 2020-21 data highlights disproportionate numbers of missing females from Asian/Asian British backgrounds. Female children from Asian communities represents 6% of missing children over the 12 month period, however, 12% of

these children are missing. The data for Asian males on the other hand shows that there was 3% missing and they represent 6% of children in care.

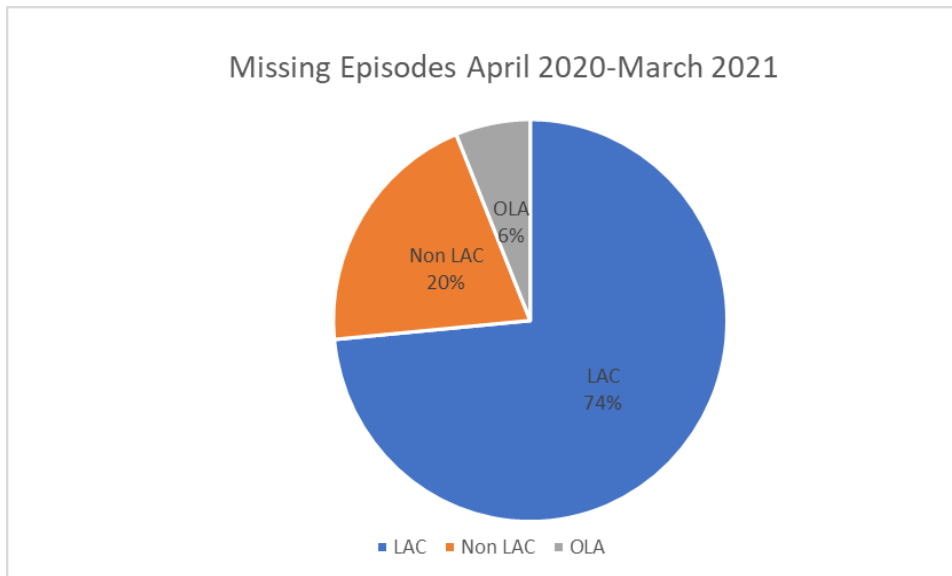
- 3.9 The same is evident in the case of Black/African/Caribbean/British boys. They represent 43% of children in care, however the number missing is 62%. There are clear challenges identified in the data with a higher number of this ethnic group going missing in relation to the numbers in care.

4 PERFORMANCE DATA

- 4.1 The service area which has the highest number of young people reported missing is the children looked after teams, at 41% (82) of missing individual children for this period, which reflects national figures.



- 4.2 The 82 looked after children having multiple episodes make up the 74% of occasions where young people go missing. This is in line with national trends, as CLA tend to go missing more frequently.



2020/21 Return Home Interview Performance

4.3 In the period March 2020 – April 2021 the number of RHIs offered was 109 (details below), with an acceptance rate of 59%. Further analysis of this performance data helped to identify gaps in terms of what is needed to drive up the engagement and acceptance rates.

Number of YP	YP Offered RHI	RHI Accepted	% of RHI Accepted
172*	109	64	59

(*Numbers excluding other Local Authorities' Looked After children as they are responsible for the RHIs).

Factors to take into consideration include the following:

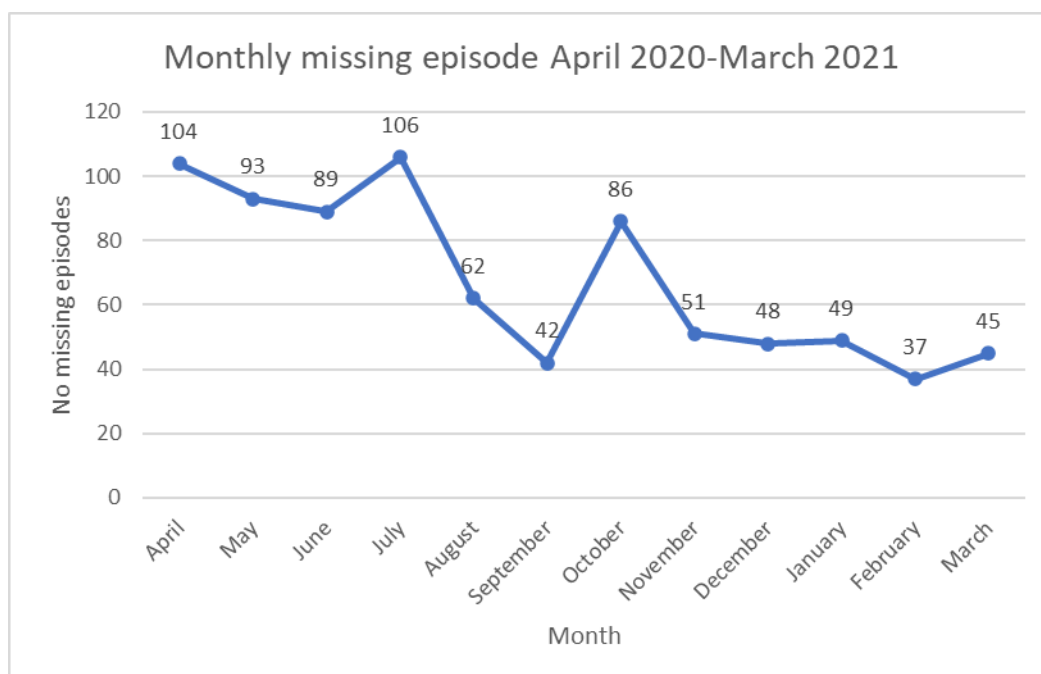
- ♦ Repeat missing child/young person – reported missing again before RHI conducted.
- ♦ Priority given to child/young person categorised as high risk.
- ♦ Child/ young people absconding from their locations to avoid RHI
- ♦ RHI refusals from 17 year olds.
- ♦ Parent/carer refused RHI – this appears to be when a young person is reported missing from home . The local authority and its partners have no

legal powers to insist on the conduct of an RHI unless the risk of significant harm is suspected.

- ♦ All missing children and young people who return to placement are offered a RHI within 72 hours . This is supported by written communication and offers of support to both the carer and the young person.

4.4 Over a third of the missing episode were by the top 10 most frequently missing children, all were looked after for at least part of the year.

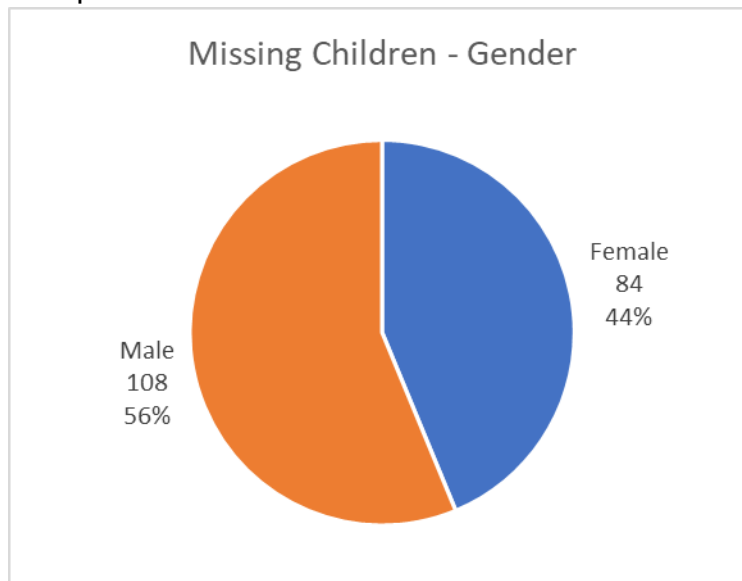
Child/Young Person	Gender	No: of episodes for this period	Number RHI Offered	Number RHI accepted	Modal time missing
1.AB	F	43	7	1	24-48 hours
2.BC	M	41	31	5	12-24 hours
3.CD	F	38	29	6	12-24 hours
4.DE	M	30	22	3	12-24 hours
5.EF	F	29	14	5	12-24 hours
6.FG	M	28	18	7	12-24 hours
7.GH	M	25	19	3	12-24 hours
8.HI	F	24	18	3	12-24 hours
9.IJ	M	21	14	4	12-24 hours
10.JK	F	18	15	1	12-24 hours



4.5 The number of missing episodes appear on a downward trend with sharp fluctuations during the summer months reaching a peak at 106 in July and falling rapidly to 42 by September. This increases by October and then follows generally a downward scale for the following half of the year to March 2021.

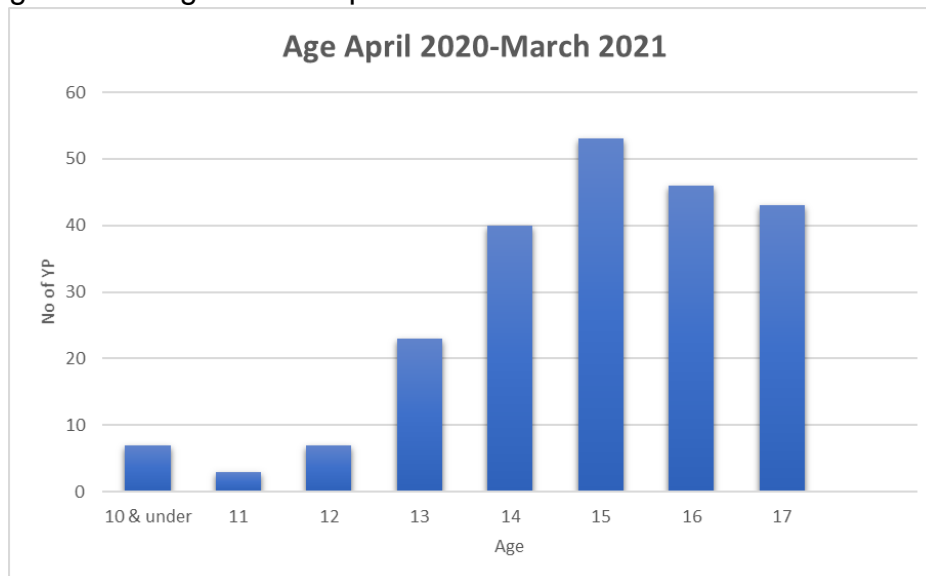
There is a correlation between the lockdown measures and the reductions of the, night-time economy.

4.6 Gender April – March 2021



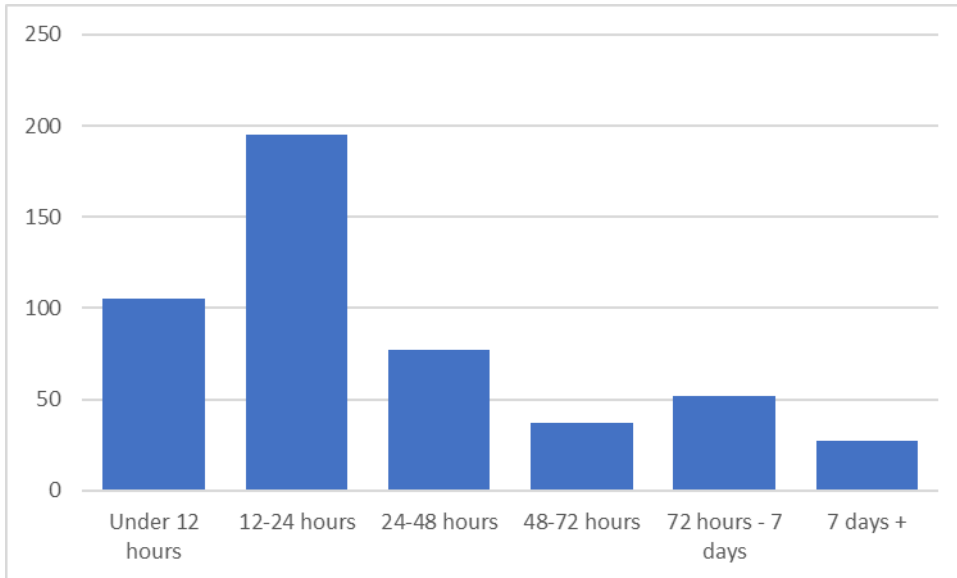
The majority of child/young people reported missing are male

4.7 Age of missing children April – March 2021



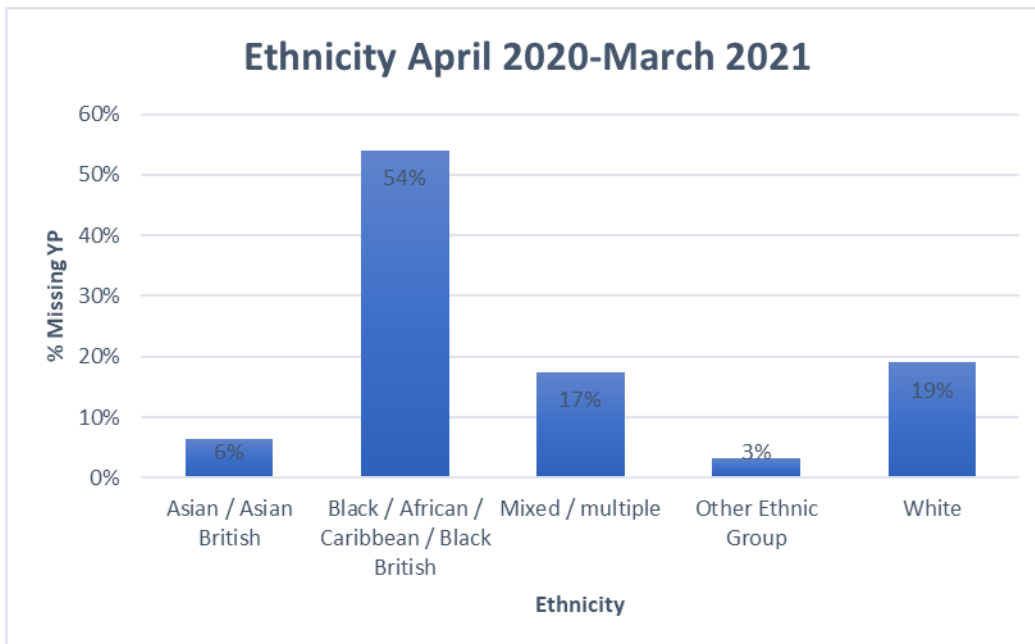
The majority of child/young people reported missing are aged 15 -17 years old.

4.8 Length of each missing episode



The majority of young people missing for less than eight hours and over 48 hours are (OLA / CLA) travelling back to their Local Authority areas or are Haringey's most frequent missing believed to be involved in county lines.

4.9 Ethnicity



The majority of missing children are from the Black/African/Caribbean/Black British group 54%, with White being the second group at 19%, mixed ethnicity comprises 17%, Asian 6%. All other ethnic groups are 3%.

Case studies and direct prevention work:

4.10 A return interview is only effective if appropriate follow up support is offered to the young person to help them address the issues that has caused them to run away or they experienced while they ran away. Information obtained can assist and advise workers to help put a plan in place to address any issues identified during the return interview.

4.11 This may include a reassessment, initiating a team around the family or a referral to specialist services such as CAMHS or involvement of colleagues from the voluntary agencies. For the young people we are most worried about their needs and intervention plans are considered at the Edge of Care Panel, with psychologist and other clinical leads.

4.12 Partners can identify 'hot spots', areas where children are going missing and individuals who may target children for sexual exploitation. The collaboration with the police can potentially lead to prosecutions.

4.13 Case example of the benefits of an RHI

RHI officer identified that there was a group of young girls aged 13 – 14 who had multiple missing episodes linked to another young person who was known to another LA. A complex strategy meeting was arranged and lead to joint working with another LA as well other agencies and services to disrupt and put in place actions to safeguard all three young people. The RHI and the role of the Missing Co-ordinator was critical to triangulating the risks and planning the disruptions with the police. The analysis of the missing data identified the locations generating vulnerabilities in the community and informed the police response to prevent harm to other young people.