

Themed Audit Scope Document

*This section to be agreed before work commences – agreed by Steering Group
19/09/2013*

Title of work	Missing Children Themed Audit
Requested / Commissioned by:	Lancashire County Council Directorate for Children and Young People
Background	<p>The purpose of this themed audit is to study incidents of all CYP who go missing in Lancashire, whether they are in the care system or not. It is intended to investigate, analyse, compare and contrast data to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inform recommendations relating to existing practice to support improved outcomes for all CYP who may be at risk of going missing, and • inform revised guidance and enhance cross-service and multi-agency working practice. <p>However, the data held relating to Missing Children is currently fragmented and held by different services and across various agencies. The information held across Lancashire must therefore be collected, collated and analysed for compliance, quality and accuracy in order to provide a robust basis for informing future decision-making. The CYP who are the focus of this study are among the most vulnerable in our society; the current situation is not good enough. Lancashire recognises that it is unacceptable that involved services and agencies are reliant on data which is recognised as having significant gaps.</p> <p>This study aims to be the catalyst that allows us to begin to address the disparity, develop a consistent method for recording and sharing information, and put appropriate and timely preventative measures in place, combined with effective responses when incidents occur.</p> <p>The OFSTED report 'Missing Children' (February 2013) highlights that two thirds of the total number of people reported missing each year are children and young people. Further, CYP in the care system are three times more likely to go missing than those who are not in care. It is also an accepted fact that all CYP who go missing are more exposed to being at risk of CSE, becoming perpetrators or victims of crime or being drawn into drug and alcohol abuse.</p>
Objective of work / Problem definition / Reasons for work taking place	<p>Lancashire wishes to understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many CYP go missing each year; • Why certain CYP go missing recurrently • What the split is in terms of numbers re: those in residential care placements, those in foster care placements and those who remain in the family home;

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether there are biases exacerbating identified risks e.g. gender, age groups, ethnicity, sexual orientation etc. • The overall reasons why CYP choose to run away and 'take their chances' alone in the world, rather than stay within a certain placement / home setting; • Are there any countywide peaks or troughs in reported incidents, e.g. seasonal changes (lighter nights / warmer weather)? • Are there any 'hot spots' within districts or the county as a whole that report higher levels of missing episodes? Why? What triggers are there, e.g. running away with a friend or sibling; a small number of CYP who skew the data due to extremely high incidents? • What cross-boundary issues are there for a county the size of Lancashire, and how are we tracking CYP who are placed out of area, or those that other LAs have placed within our boundaries? • What factors are likely to reduce incidents of CYP going missing? • How can we improve assessment measures regarding levels of risk? • What are the best options / methods for a preventative response to those assessed as being at risk, or for responding to those with an established history of going missing? • How can we ensure that reported unauthorised absences do not skew the data for those who go missing? • Identify the best established / most promising practice for reducing incidents of going missing; • What are the links between going missing and other difficulties already known to be factors in their lives? • How can we take account of the needs of all CYP to have a nurturing home environment and ensure that all residential children's homes are compliant with a standard that CYP would determine for themselves? • What roles do / should partner agencies play to best meet needs? E.g. health, police, education • What do CYP say they want /need to stop them from considering running away as their preferred option? Nobody runs away without a reason.
Link to service improvement / strategic objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve cross-service working practices • Improve multi-agency partnership working • Develop a more cohesive and robust picture that can be reliably used to inform strategic priorities • Use the information strategically to influence the

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	<p>realignment and targeting of limited resources to maximise positive impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the information to revise and refresh the QA framework / existing protocol regarding Missing Children • Improve outcomes for CYP identified as being at risk of going missing • Cognisance of consultations on Missing Children • Link to work of LSCB Missing Children Sub-Group
Brief description of process(es)	<p>This aims to be a change-orientated study, beginning with a deep-dive audit of a stratified sample of selected case files from across the range of placement types and CSC levels of intervention (n=70). The entire cohort will also be checked for previous CAF assessments. Following this, cross-service and multi-agency work will be undertaken, engaging key stakeholders in (semi-structured?) interviews, possibly using 'appreciative inquiry' (Liebling, Price and Elliot, 1999), and / or similar asset approach models; telephone and face-to-face interviews. The aim is to explore the key issues (above) from the perspectives of CYP themselves, and from professionals and practitioners directly engaged with the issues, and therefore, best able to effect change at the front line, thereby better protecting young people at risk. Detailed analysis at individual levels will be compared and contrasted across groups and localities where possible, resulting in a robust, replicable and detailed understanding of thematic issues across different groups.</p>
In scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – All CYP assessed as being at risk of going missing / have already got a history of going missing
Out of scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Unauthorised absences – Families who go missing
Other parameters / variables	<p>'Push' factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rejection: children who are, or have been, cared for by extended family and or friends, including prior to becoming looked after - family conflict - domestic violence / domestic abuse at home - parental reports of behavioural difficulties in their children - family change, including lone and reconstituted families - truancy - many changes of address - episodes of going missing including established patterns prior to becoming looked after - CYP with insecure attachment(s) - Abuse / Neglect - 'Toxic Trio' <p>'Pull' factors:</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A positive choice by the CYP to be somewhere else - Drawn by external relationships e.g. boyfriend / girlfriend / peers - Groomed by sexual predators
Interfaces	<p>Directorate / Cross Service / Multi-Agency / VCFS / Youth Forum / Children in Care Council / Children's Society / MASH</p> <p>Use of designed materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specific audit tool developed - Questionnaire design (Likert Scale?) - Interview design - Quantitative data should compliment qualitative information and vice versa i.e. not perceived as antagonistic - Application of advanced social data analysis techniques, likely to include (but not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Multiple Regression (for correlational ranking of variables against criterion) o T-tests (for statistical significance at an accepted scientific level) o Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) as appropriate for comparison of groups – this may be useful to identify differences between an identified 'hot-spot' and another, seemingly similar, group or locality
Dependencies, Assumptions, Risks	<p>Avoid sampling bias – random selection provides representative samples only with large enough numbers, which may not be possible. Use of non-random selection techniques will be necessary e.g. stratified sampling by pre-defining the groups to be represented e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Missing episodes linked to CAF assessment - Missing episodes reported to the Police - CLA in residential placements - CLA in foster care placements - CYP who remain within parental care: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o CSC referral cases o CSC Assessment cases o CSC CiN cases o CSC CP cases o CLA Placed Out Of County o CLA placed in Lancs - CYP who are not subject to statutory level interventions and remain within parental care; acknowledge that there is under-reporting within this category, but align with CAF information as far as possible re: efficacy of earlier intervention and support

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	<p>-</p> <p>Validity – ensure methodology is robust enough to actually measure what is intended i.e. identify possibly spurious data and eliminate (e.g. unauthorised absences)</p> <p>Not inferring causality from positively correlated data - further analysis must be undertaken where such trends emerge</p> <p>Understand background to address any potentially confounding variables, e.g. historical data indicates poorer outcomes for CYP in residential care – ensure the perception is not that the care system is 'to blame' – it is often the case that recurrent and repeated episodes of going missing mean that a YP is placed in residential care.</p> <p>Generalisation: risk that the sample size may not be replicable or reliable enough to generalise results across the target population (external validity)</p>
Preferred timescales	Start September 2013 - Completion by end February 2014
Desired outcome(s) of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve outcomes for CYP identified as being at risk of going missing / history of episodes of going missing • Improve cross-service working practices • Improve multi-agency partnership working • Develop a more cohesive and robust picture that can be reliably used to inform strategic priorities • Use the information strategically to influence the realignment and targeting of limited resources to maximise positive impact • Use the information to revise and refresh the QA framework / existing protocol regarding Missing Children • Take account of DfE national recommendations with regard to missing children
<i>This section lists proposals & may be subject to change when work commences</i>	
Proposed methodology	See above – some details still to be determined as the cohort information emerges and is collated from a variety of sources.
Proposed service areas to be involved	<p>LCC Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safeguarding, Inspection and Audit Team - Children's Social Care - Children Missing Education - Young Peoples' Service - Children's Trusts – (Hannah Peake) - LSCB - Youth Justice

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fostering and Adoption - Youth Offending - Schools / education providers - MASH - WTWF (incl 'Troubled Families' list cross-ref) - Early Support – CAF assessments - Integrated Health Services – EHWB / CAMHS - Public Health – mental health for CYP <p>Partner Agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Police - Probation - Health - 3rd Sector
Auditors to be involved & in what capacity	<p>Cheryl Smith – Senior Auditor – Lead for overall work: Design, Methodology, Procedure, Analysis, Results, Findings, Recommendations, Final reporting</p> <p>Damian Fleming – Auditor – deep dive of individual cases, cross service interrogation and multi-agency working including meetings; initial findings / recommendations</p> <p>Jo Turner – Auditor - deep dive of individual cases, cross service interrogation and multi-agency working including meetings; initial findings / recommendations</p>

Version Control

No	Purpose	Author	Date
v1.0	Initial draft proposed scope and methodology	C Smith	28 June 2013
V2.0	Draft 2 incl CAF update and TM / SA input	C Smith	19 July 2013
V3.0	Final Version	C Smith	15 September 2013