STAFFORDSHIRE STRATEGIC MISSING BOARD

Young People Missing from Care, Home and Education in Staffordshire Performance Report
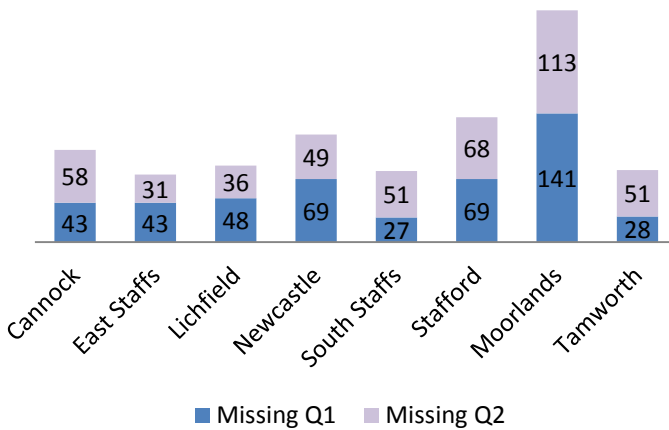
Staffordshire County Council

Introduction ▼

This report covers the period for Q1 and Q2 2016/17 and follows on from the annual report produced for 2015/16. This report collates information about those children and young people who go missing from care, home and education, reported incidents from the police, the top 15 young people going missing update and other local authority missing children audits and consultation carried out with young people.   A monthly Missing Report is now produced; this report will look further at trends and themes that are arising from the work currently being undertaken to monitor and understand young people that go missing.

Summary Headlines ▼

- Police reported incidents of missing young people remain stable with 925 reported missing and 356 reported as absent for Q1 and Q2, the majority in the North of the County

- A total of 577 young people went missing from home and care, with a total of 909 missing episodes and majority of young people going missing (76%) have had previous missing episodes.

- The majority of young people (87%) going missing were between the ages of 12 and 16 years of age, with 15 year olds being the most likely age to go missing (271).

- Most young people who go missing are found within one day (85%).

- The split between Staffordshire and Other Local Authorities has remained stable with roughly a third of Other LA children going missing in Staffordshire

- 44% of young people go missing from Independent Care Homes, with another 38% going missing from home

- Missing from Education - both actual and potential numbers have generally shown an increase year on year from 2013/14 – 15/16.

- 81% of Return Home Interviews are undertaken with young people who go missing

- A second cohort of the top 15 missing young people have been considered and the majority of the characteristics of both cohorts were very similar including youth offending and special educational needs support as well as links to Child Sexual Exploitation

- An Other Local Authority Looked After Missing Children audit was undertaken for 28 young people. The majority of notifications included information of social worker details and legal status, but they were not so good at notifying risk factors. The most common push factors were being bored and not getting on with carers. The most common pull factor was returning to family as not wanting to be in care

- Feedback from the Children in Care Council on the topic of missing young people highlighted characteristics of a good support worker for children who go missing. These included being a good listener, respectful, a good communicator, being able to build relationships and knowing someone cares about them. Findings will be used by the local authority when commissioning new Services/workers

Reported Incidents – Missing and Absent

Police Reported Incidents: Missing

Legend: ■ Missing Q1 ■ Missing Q2

Categories: Cannock, East Staffs, Lichfield, Newcastle, South Staffs, Stafford, Moorlands, Tamworth

Area	Missing Q1	Missing Q2
Cannock	43	58
East Staffs	43	31
Lichfield	48	36
Newcastle	69	49
South Staffs	27	51
Stafford	69	68
Moorlands	141	113
Tamworth	28	51

Source: Police

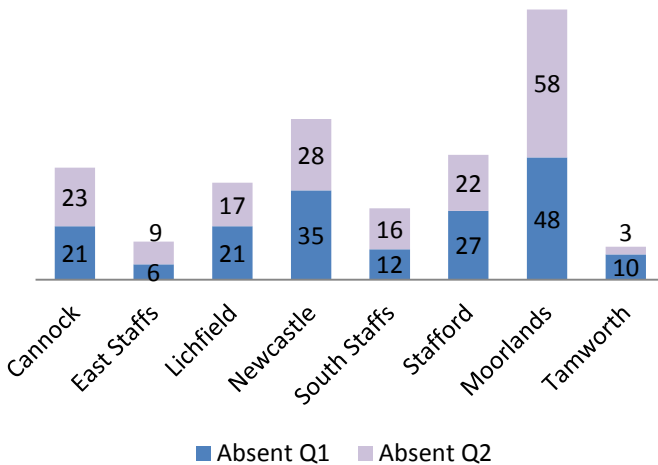Reporting is based on where the young person is found.

925 young people have been reported missing to the police for Q1 and Q2

The majority of young people reported missing are from the North of the County; in the Moorlands, 254 young people and in Newcastle, 118 for Q1 and Q2 which has remained stable from last year.

South Staffs and Tamworth have the least reported missing incidents, with 78 and 79 respectively.

Police Reported Incidents: Absent

Legend: ■ Absent Q1 ■ Absent Q2

Categories: Cannock, East Staffs, Lichfield, Newcastle, South Staffs, Stafford, Moorlands, Tamworth

Area	Absent Q1	Absent Q2
Cannock	21	23
East Staffs	6	9
Lichfield	21	17
Newcastle	35	28
South Staffs	12	16
Stafford	27	22
Moorlands	48	58
Tamworth	10	3

Source: Police

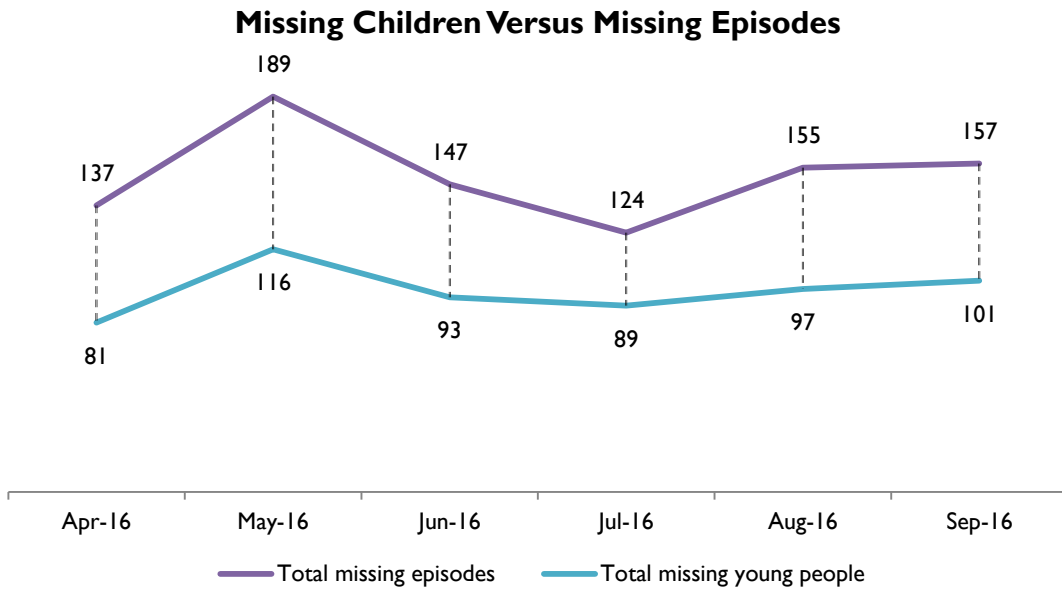356 young people were reported absent during Q1 and Q2

Moorlands also have the most reported incidents of young people reported absent, 106 during Q1 and Q2. Newcastle (63) being the next most likely location for reported absent incidents.

Tamworth (13) and East Staffs (15) have the least reported incidents of absent.

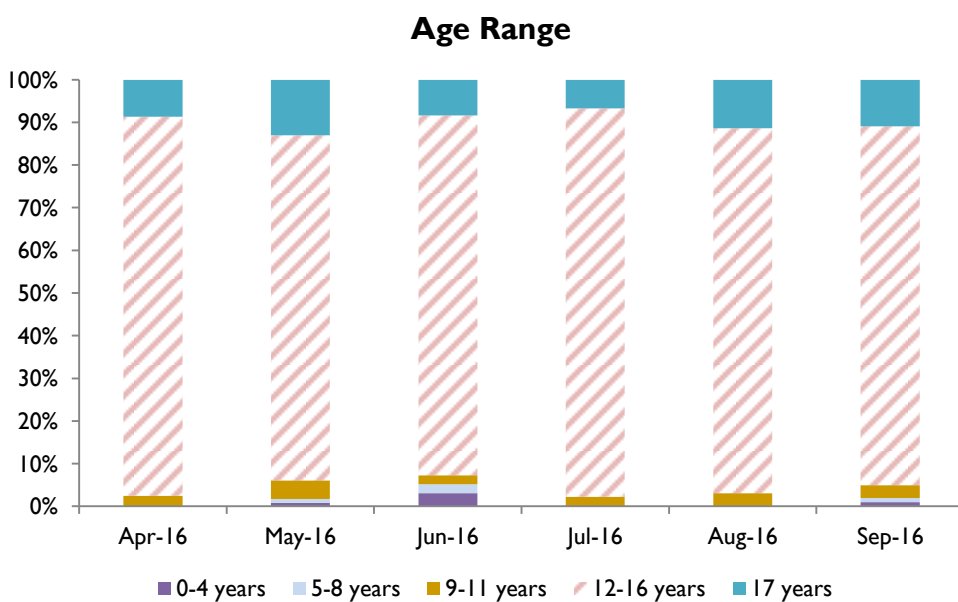Stafford has seen a decrease in both reported missing and absent incidents since last year.

Missing Young People and Missing Episodes from Home and Care

Missing Children Versus Missing Episodes

Total missing episodes — Total missing young people

Source: Staffordshire Missing Datasheet

During Q1 & Q2, 577 young people went missing from home and care, with a total of 909 missing care episodes. Numbers of young people going missing fluctuate over the period, with the lowest recorded in April (81 young people going missing 137 times) and the highest in the following month of May (116 young people going missing 189 times). Young people going missing over the first half of the year has remained relatively stable, with an average of 97 going missing since January 2016. The majority of young people going missing (76%) have had previous missing episodes.
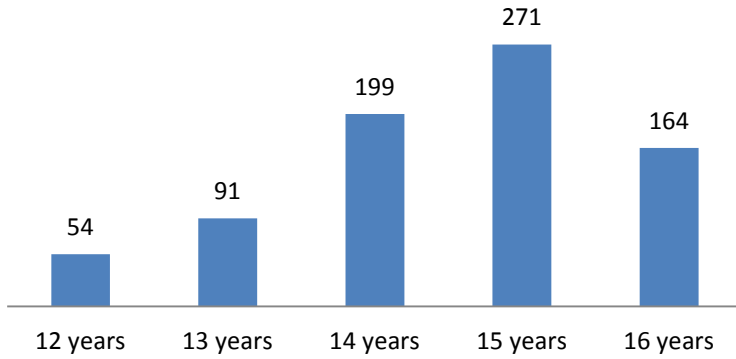
Missing From Home and Care Young People Profile

Age Range

■ 0-4 years ■ 5-8 years ■ 9-11 years ⧄ 12-16 years ■ 17 years

Source: Staffordshire Missing Datasheet

The majority of young people (87%) going missing were between the ages of 12 and 16 years of age. Very young children (0 – 4 year olds) that go missing are usually with the mother of the child, reported missing by their partner.
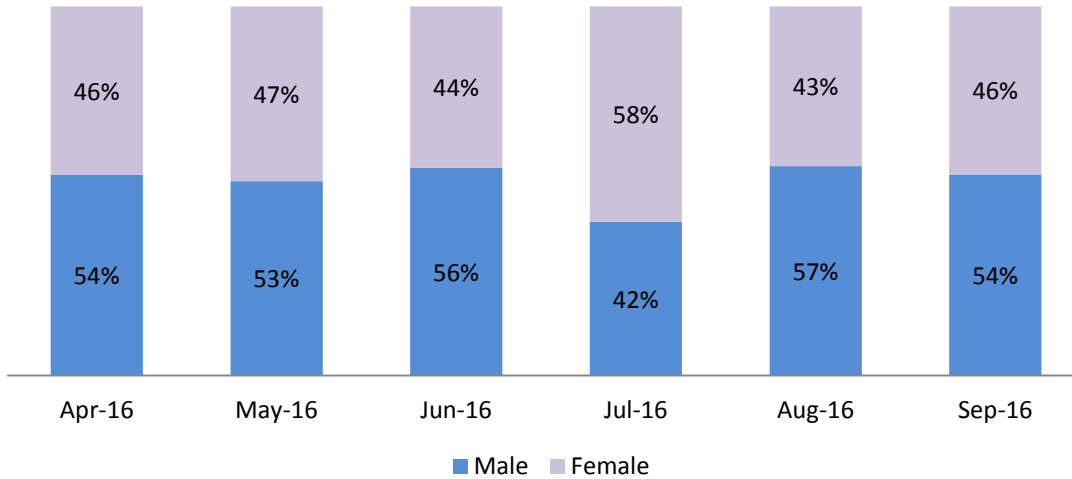
Age Breakdown of Young People Going Missing 12 - 17 years

Looking at the breakdown of the 12 – 16 year old age range over the period, most young people are older, with 15 year olds being the most likely age to go missing (271).

Age	Count
12 years	54
13 years	91
14 years	199
15 years	271
16 years	164

Source: Staffordshire Missing Datasheet

Gender of Young People Going Missing

Month	Male	Female
Apr-16	54%	46%
May-16	53%	47%
Jun-16	56%	44%
Jul-16	42%	58%
Aug-16	57%	43%
Sep-16	54%	46%

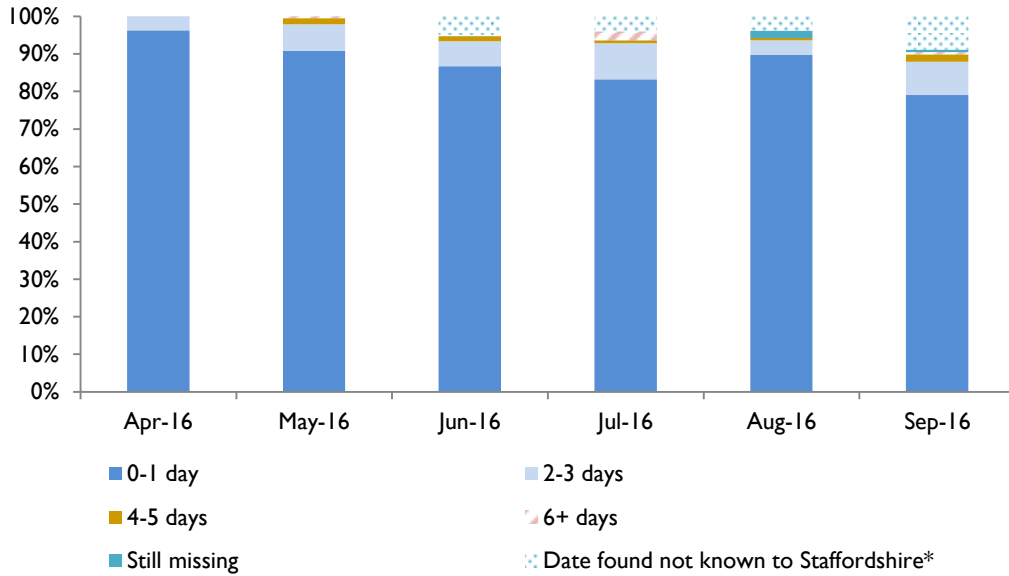■ Male ■ Female

Source: Staffordshire Missing Datasheet

The gender split between male and female is mainly stable for Q1& Q2, with a mainly even split between male and female, only in July were there more girls than boys that went missing. This differs from that reported for Q4 last year, where girls going missing were the higher proportion overall (on average 52%).
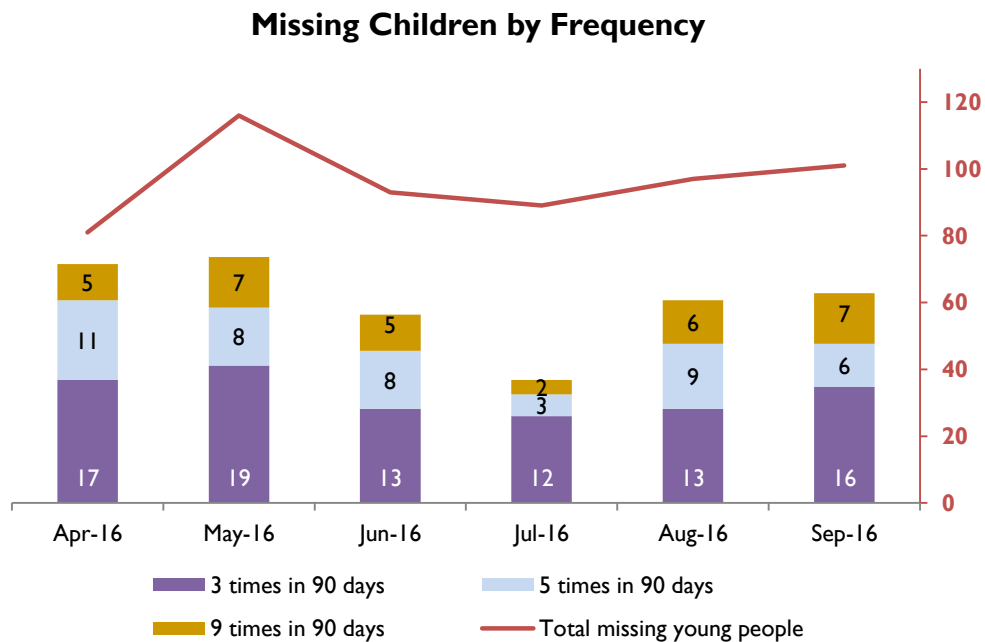
Duration of Missing Episodes
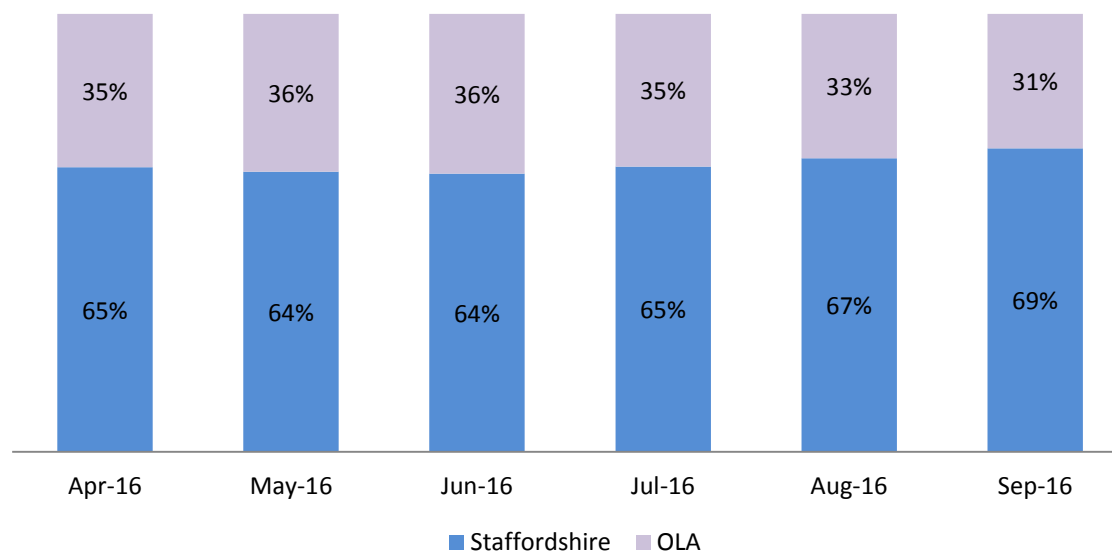

Source: Staffordshire Missing Datasheet

For those young people that go missing the majority (85%) are found between 0 – 1 day, with another 7% found between 2 – 3 days, for 4% the date found is not known to Staffordshire.

Missing Children by Frequency

54% of those young people who went missing over the period went missing 3 times in the last 90 days, 27% who go missing went missing 5 times in last 90 days, with 19% who go missing, going missing 9 times in the last 90 days.

Business Improvement and Development

Other Local Authority Young People versus Staffordshire Young People

Source: Staffordshire Missing Datasheet

Around a third of missing episodes relate to Other Local Authority children going missing in Staffordshire, however this has remained stable over the period and from the previous year. Young people from Other Local Authorities that go missing, are mainly from Leek (67) and Biddulph (64), which corresponds with the large numbers of Independent Care Homes in the north of the County. For Staffordshire young people, the majority of missing episodes are from Tamworth (88) and Stafford (79), mostly from home (62) with 20 missing episodes from the Alders Children Home.
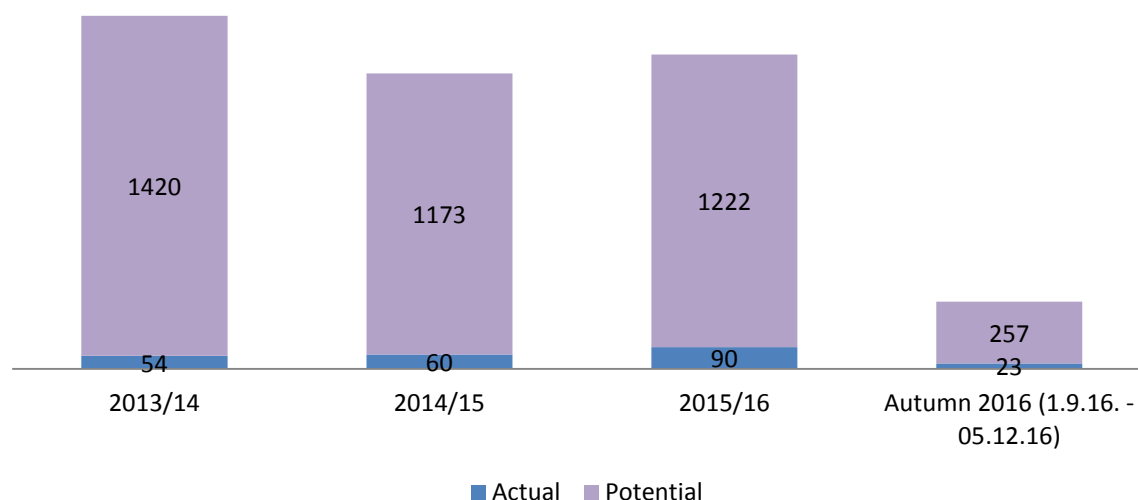
Missing Episodes and Placement Types

Summary by Placement Type	Apr-16	May-16	Jun-16	Jul-16	Aug-16	Sep-16
Indep. Childrens homes	56	82	67	59	73	65
Home (Social Worker)	18	24	33	18	31	34
Home (LST)	24	36	31	28	29	40
Foster carer not staffs	10	25	3	4	7	7
Foster carer	8	9	8	6	2	5
Supported accommodation	18	7	3	2	3	3
External placed	0	1	0	0	2	0
Local Authority childrens homes	3	2	2	7	8	3
Unknown	0	3	0	0	0	0
Totals	**137**	**189**	**147**	**124**	**155**	**157**

Source: Staffordshire Missing Datasheet

44% (404) of missing episodes are from Independent Care Homes, of those episodes from these homes, 78% are from Other Local Authorities. Another 38% (346) missing episodes are from Home (188 LSTs and 158 have a social worker). 10% of missing episodes were from Foster Care provision (56 Other LA and 38 Staffordshire).

Business Improvement and Development

Missing From Education (academic years)

Source: Capita One

Note: Data for the Autumn term 2016 is provisional data up to 5/12/16 and will be updated accordingly – it is expected to increase inline with previous years

Definitions:

Actual – children who were identified across the year as living in Staffordshire and being without an educational provision
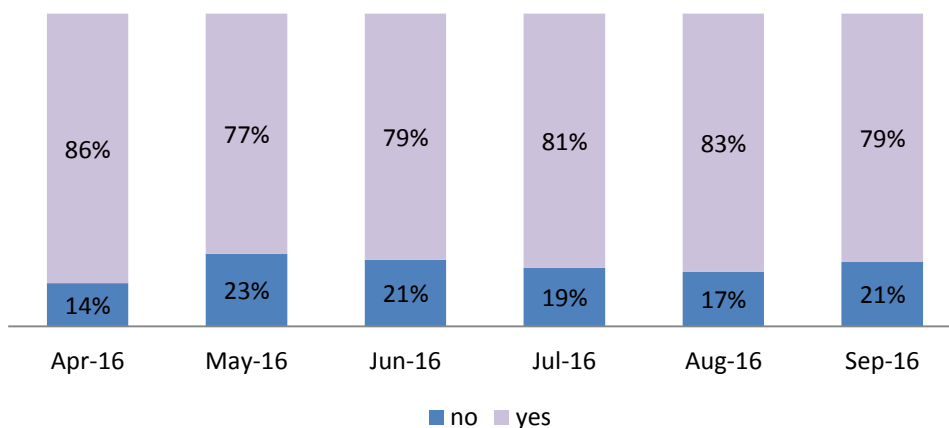
Potential – children identified across the year as having left their educational provision and whereabouts and provision were unknown.

Both actual and potential numbers have generally shown an increase year on year from 2013/14 – 15/16. There are many factors that may have contributed to the increase including:

- Better reporting by professionals and members of the public

- Increased mobility of families, particularly to areas where there is a high demand for school places

- Academisation of schools – schools are less willing to admit pupils leading to delayed admissions

- An increase in school population, 1056 extra pupils since 2012/13

- An increase in transient population – pupils do not remain at their schools for as long and often leave the UK

- Data issues – pupils on mainstream rolls are showing as without a school place due to uploading data from school information systems to the local authority

Return Home Interviews

Return Interviews

Source: Staffordshire Missing Datasheet

On average, over Q1 & Q2, a total of 81% of return interviews are undertaken for children that go missing; 59% are held within 72 hours. It is often difficult to conduct these interviews meeting the 72 hour guideline when young people have gone missing from home and therefore, having to rely on the cooperation of the family/young person making themselves available. There have been numerous occasions when arrangements have been made only to find that the young person is not at home when the visit time has been agreed.

Reasons Given By Young People for Going Missing

The reasons given for young people going missing are consistent with reasons reported previously; 'stayed out longer than should/to be with friend' was the most common reason given, followed by 'no apparent reason'. Other reasons provided include coping mechanism, unsettled at home, substance misuse, boredom, confrontation and family ties. For a small number (10) possible Child Sexual Exploitation has been recorded as the reason for going missing.

Top 15 – Prolific Missing Young People

The Missing Children Operational Group has looked at the 15 most prolific missing young people on two occasions, December 2015 and November 2016. The characteristics of the young people and the risks, pull and push factors relating to the missing episodes were considered.

Current situation of the previous cohort

Five of the December 2015 cohort were other Local Authority (OLA) Looked After Children (LAC).
- three have moved out of Staffordshire
- two young people are still in Staffordshire, but missing episodes are greatly reduced

Ten of the December 2015 cohort were Staffordshire young people. Six were LAC.
  Of the six LAC
  - two have turned 18
  - one young person has been placed outside Staffordshire
  - one young person's missing episodes have reduced following another young person moving from the placement
  - one young person's missing episodes have reduced and they have returned home
  - one young person's missing episodes have reduced and a return home is planned

  Of the four living at home
  - one has been accommodated and is now placed out of Staffordshire
  - one has turned 18
  - two have reduced their missing episodes and the cases are being stepped down through the tiers of services

Characteristics

The majority of the characteristics of both cohorts of young people were very similar.

The November 2016 cohort shows higher levels of special educational needs, higher levels of exclusions in the current year and higher levels of recent offending than the December 2015 cohort.

Findings from the Nov 16 cohort:

- There is a high correlation with young people going missing and CSE concerns, with 10 of the 15 known to the CSE Panels.

- 10 young people have a substance misuse issue and 9 misuse alcohol

- Eight are currently on a youth offending order, 4 for violent offences and 4 for possession of weapons

- 12 young people have special educational needs; one Statement and 11receiving special educational needs support.

- 11 had fixed term exclusions from school, 7 of which were in the current academic year.

- Five have been permanently excluded from school, 2 of which were in the current academic year.

Other Local Authority Looked After Missing Children Audit

28 Looked After Children placed in Staffordshire by other local authorities were identified and notifications from the placing authority or the provider regarding the young person being placed in Staffordshire were checked.

A small number of young people were placed a significant distance from their home authority. Sandwell, Stoke, Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Dudley and Nottinghamshire had more than one young person placed in Staffordshire.

Notifications from placing Local Authority: Notifications were received on 19 of the 28 young people. Three were before the start of the placement in Staffordshire, 12 after the start of the placement (some the day after, some a number of weeks after) and four when the young person moved out of their Staffordshire placement. The majority shared social worker contact details and the young person's legal status. However in most cases risk factors were not included in the notification, when they were CSE and offending behaviour were highlighted.

Notifications from residential providers: Young people had been placed with 21 residential homes run by 15 different residential providers. Two young people were placed with Independent Foster Agency carers who are not obliged to notify the Local Authority when young people are placed within their borders.

No notification was received from the placement provider for nearly half of the placements.

Provider notifications contained very little information, often just the young person's Social Worker's name and legal status. There is no correlation between the timing of the notification and the amount of information provided. Many providers provided the details for the young person's IRO. Only one provider had given details of risk factors for the young person.

Return interviews: Return interviews for 19 of the young people were completed by Brighter Futures and seven by Staffordshire's Missing Children Support Workers.

Push and pull factors were well identified in 15 of the return interviews. In the majority of cases, these were young people who had not gone missing on many previous occasions. The most common push factors were being bored and not getting on with carers. The most common pull factor was returning to family as not wanting to be in care. One person conducting the return interview asked the carers about levels of contact with family.

The commonality of the ten return interviews where push and pull factors were not clear was a lack of engagement from the young person. In some cases this was possibly due to the number of previous return interviews they had received and in others the presence of other young people or staff members may have been the cause.

Completing return interviews on behalf of the placing authority: There have been no blanket decisions by any placing authority for Staffordshire '<u>not</u>' to undertake return interviews. However, we are occasionally contacted by the placing authority following a specific episode when they have expressed a wish to carry out their own return interview, but this is child specific.

All of the completed return interviews were sent to the placing authority within five working days, with half being sent either the day they were completed or the following working day.

Current location: 24 of the 28 young people are still in Staffordshire. Of the four young people who are no longer placed in Staffordshire, two were newly into care and said that they wanted to go home and so were likely to go missing again. The two other young people had four and five previous missing episodes in Staffordshire each.

Voice Project: Children in Care Council discussion on Missing Children

None of the CICC taking part in the session had been reported as going missing. The session covered what support information could be offered to young people who go missing, reasons why young people might go missing, what makes young people feel safe and what traits a support worker should have to work with young people who go missing.

Findings

Young people suggested that having a list of contact numbers when they feel like running away again (including Childline) ,a top tips information sheet, including reasons or misunderstandings that are the cause of running away may prove useful. Having a buddy, mentor or advocate who has been through the same or similar situation who could empathise with their situation could also help. The information provided will be used by the local authority when commissioning new Missing Services/Workers.

There were several responses given for the reasons why they thought young people went missing including:

- Mental Health including emotional, stress and behaviour
- Depression, anxiety or heartache
- Wanting to see their birth family
- Not feeling safe and secure where they live
- Wanting to see friends they were moved away from
- Placement move not gone well
- Issues with other young people in placement
- Wanting to see ex carers that were removed from

Young people reported feeling safe when they knew someone cared about them, that they have a good relationship with their carer/s and time is taken to make a bond so they can talk openly about any worries. Ensuring that placement matching is right and that where possible children are placed with siblings or that good contact is maintained when they're not.

Being kind, understanding, a good listener, being calm, respectful and having a good personality were all characteristics young people thought a worker should have to work with young people that go missing. The worker must be a good communicator (possibly using art and music), take time to speak to them and not be rushed, check back after a few days, ensure consistency of worker to build relationships and be sensitive to reasons of going missing were considered to be important. Advocacy skills would also be helpful. Workers should endeavour to find out about individual circumstances of the young person prior to meeting with them so that they have an understanding of young person. Meeting with the young person in a neutral location that's accessible to them and to be given a choice of a male or female worker was also put forward by those consulted.

Recommendations and next steps ▾

- Launch notification process letters to Other Local Authorities in January

- Follow up audit in six months time to see if notification letters have improved other local authorities informing us of young people being placed in Staffordshire

- Review of the missing return form following pilot in Sept – Dec 2016

- Launch good practice guide for staff

- Local Safeguarding Board Protocol on Young People Who Go Missing from Home & Care following DfE guidance to be agreed at the January LSCB Policy & Procedure Sub Group