

REPORT TO:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee 6 February 2018
SUBJECT:	Missing Children and Return Home Interviews
LEAD OFFICER:	Barbara Peacock, Executive Director, People
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Alisa Flemming
PERSON LEADING AT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING:	Philip Segurola, Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care

ORIGIN OF ITEM:	This item is contained in the sub-committee's agreed work programme.
BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:	There are still a significant number of children and young people going missing, with several of these repeatedly. The return home interview rate is gradually improving and the process has been reviewed. This is being communicated to staff this week and implemented over the coming months and should result in a substantial improvement in the number of return interviews being offered and accepted. There is improved intelligence being collated and disseminated to senior and operational managers to assist in future planning.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 There are five key areas that are which are looked at month by month –

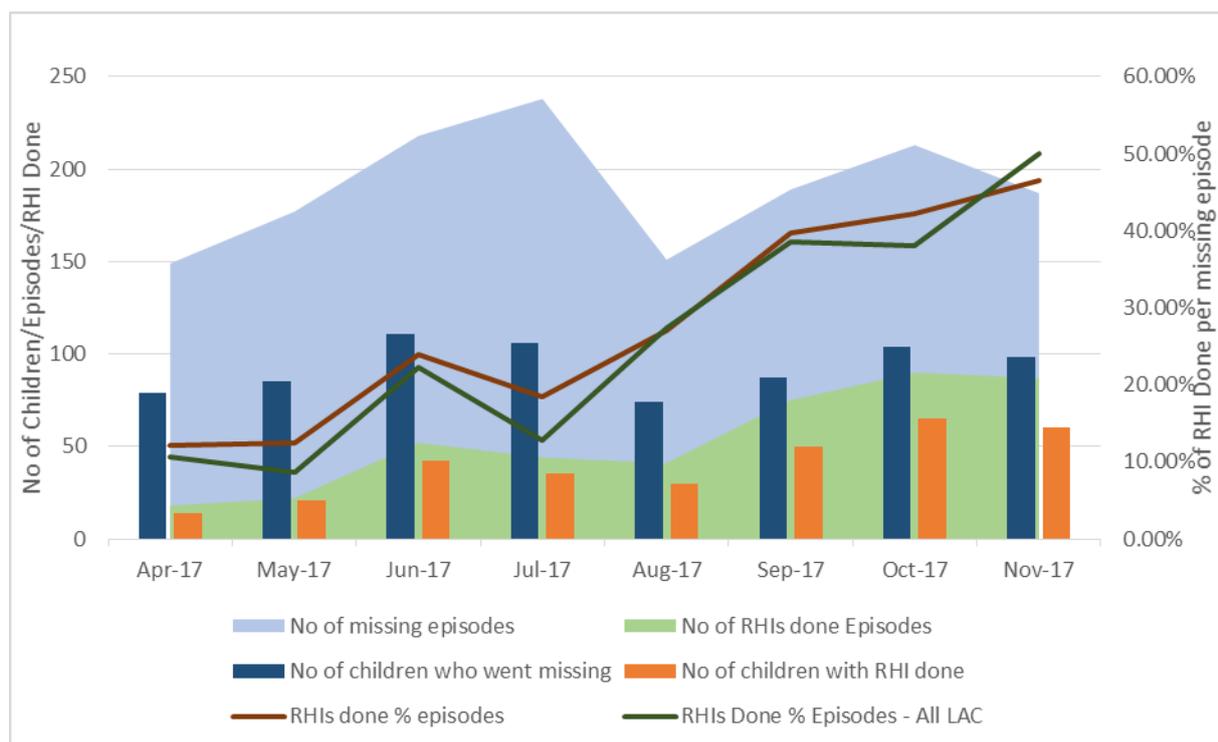
- **No of children who went missing** – this is the number of children who were missing from home or care during the month; if a child goes missing more than once a month then they will only be counted once
- **No of children where RHI was offered** - this is the number of children who were offered a return home interview (RHI) during the month, it is not the acceptance rate (see below)
- **No of children with RHI done** – this is the number of children who were offered and accepted a RHI during the month; there will be some children who have more than one RHI in a month
- **No of missing episodes** – this is the total number of all missing episodes which happened during the month – one child may have multiple episodes and each is counted
- **No of RHIs done episodes** – number of episodes where the child have been offered and accepted a return interview

- **% of episodes with RHI** – this is the % of episodes which have a completed RHI, the higher the better for this figure
- **% of LAC missing episodes with RHI** – this is the % of episodes for LAC which have a completed RHI, placed both in and out of borough

Important note – the figures below do not include OLAs (children who are looked after by another Local Authority), as it is not the responsibility of Croydon to carry out the RHI

The table and graph below show the data for April 2017 to November 2017

	Apr-17	May-17	Jun-17	Jul-17	Aug-17	Sep-17	Oct-17	Nov-17
No of children who went missing	79	85	111	106	74	87	104	98
No of children were RHI were offered	26	31	65	64	47	62	77	73
No of children with RHI done	14	21	42	35	30	50	65	60
No of missing episodes	149	177	218	238	151	189	213	187
No of RHIs done Episodes	18	22	52	44	41	75	90	87
RHI % offer rate for children	32.91%	36.47%	58.56%	60.38%	63.51%	71.26%	74.04%	74.49%
RHIs done % episodes	12.08%	12.43%	23.85%	18.49%	27.15%	39.68%	42.25%	46.52%
RHIs Done % Episodes - All LAC	10.66%	8.70%	22.35%	12.87%	27.41%	38.51%	38.04%	50.00%



- 1.1 The return interview rate is gradually improving but remains lower than expected. In interrogating the system there have been a number of issues identified, including incorrect recording: of both episodes and of interviews. In order to address this the missing team will shortly be tasked with entering all missing and found notifications – this should ensure consistency and assurance in the numbers and will be communicated to all teams in the next week. There have been some problems with recording when interviews have been completed and this is now being monitored and tracked by the missing team. The oversight has already meant an improvement in return rate and this is ongoing.
- 1.2 The missing team has been able to complete some initial analysis of the cohort of children and young people who are going missing. There are a number of 17.5 year olds who are repeatedly going missing, some as frequently as five or six times a month, and are refusing to make themselves available or complete return interviews after each episode. From discussion with workers it appears that most are with friends and resent any questions as to their whereabouts and well-being as they feel it is unnecessary and sometimes intrusive. Workers continue to offer interviews and are looking at who are the most appropriate workers to complete these. Analysts within the team are beginning to look at the detail of missing episodes as well as information gathered from return interviews and are beginning to develop an intelligence picture, for example concerning Albanian based criminality. The young people aged 17+ are responsible for a large number of the missing episodes and the low percentage of return interviews in relation to these.
- 1.3 The table above demonstrates this ie in November there were 98 children who went missing, 73 of these were offered a return interview (74%) and 60 had at least one completed (61%). When looking at episodes the number completed is much lower and some of this is accountable to these regular missing children and young people who are either unavailable for an interview (are missing again) or are refusing (46%).
- 1.4 The LAC rate is also lower than expected. The current system is that social workers complete all RHIs for children who are looked after, this can mean that they are having to travel some distance or, in the case of some of the repeat missing young people placed in other London boroughs such as Waltham Forest. This has been time consuming and often results in a visit where the young person is not available because they have refused to wait. It has been agreed that for those children and young people placed outside of Croydon or the neighbouring boroughs can have their return interviews ‘spot purchased’ by recognised, approved providers.
- 1.5 In addition to this work has been completed on reviewing the missing and return home interview process. This will be rolled out across the teams in the next two weeks. There will now be more independent workers completing interviews in an attempt to gain a greater understanding from children and young people as to why they are going missing, locations and any safeguarding concerns. There will also be an expectation that short, targeted interventions will be offered at an early point to try and stop children and young people from repeatedly going missing.
- 1.6 The team hold daily meetings to discuss children and young people who are reported as missing, these are short and explore any information that needs to be shared wider or actions that may need to be taken. In addition to that there will now be a weekly meeting with police and other, relevant agencies to discuss high risk young people who are or have been missing

for operational management oversight, information from this meeting will feed into the monthly missing panel which is jointly chaired with police colleagues. The monthly missing panel provides strategic oversight with intelligence and performance information and is multi-agency. The analysts within the missing team have developed a weekly high risk missing list that is sent to the senior management team for oversight; this provides updates on the specific cases but also highlights when actions need to be undertaken. Discussions are also taking place with the police who are hoping to have staff situated at BWH alongside the missing team, hopefully early this year. This should further develop the partnership working between the two agencies.

CONTACT OFFICER: Hannah Doughty

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None

APPENDICES: None