

**GRAMPIAN POLICE
RETURN HOME WELFARE
INTERVIEW PILOT FOR YOUNG
RUNAWAYS**

PILOT EVALUATION

**University of Stirling and Ipsos
MORI Scotland**

FINAL REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The overall aim of this evaluation was to explore the most effective means of delivering Return Home Welfare Interviews (RHWIs) to ensure the best outcomes for the child/young person. It set out to examine the operation of the pilot as implemented in Aberdeen City and Elgin, to reflect the range of models of delivery used and the overall impact of the pilot. One area in Aberdeenshire (Fraserburgh) formed the control area to illustrate original practice in Grampian and current practice outwith the pilot areas.

At the point where a missing young person is traced in both pilot areas, a 'safe and well' check will be undertaken by an operational police officer. This is a visual check to ensure the young person is safe and well. At this stage, the young person will be informed that a RHWI will be arranged. The RHWI team will make contact with the young person within five working days and the RHWI will take place as soon as possible after that. The RHWI is an interview conducted by a specially trained individual (members of a dedicated team comprising two civilian employees and a seconded police officer in Aberdeen, and Community Beat Officers (CBOs) in Elgin). The purpose of the RHWI is to gather relevant information on the young person and missing incident and to speak with the young person in order to identify any factors that prompted them to run or incidents which happened while they were away. This information is then used to ensure that the young person is referred to the appropriate service/s.

The principal conclusion of the evaluation is that RHWIs are an appropriate intervention; helping identify young people who require further support and referring them to an appropriate agency. Even without an onward referral, they can improve outcomes by helping young people appreciate the value of talking about their problems rather than running away. RHWIs are of most benefit to young people not already involved with services (just under a third of those who received a RHWI were not already involved with social work services). When young people were already accessing other services, other professionals were less convinced of the benefits of the RHWI. However, as the evaluation highlights, even where other services were in place, the RHWIs could provide benefits by obtaining information from young people which was not already known to services; and by providing the young person with an additional opportunity to engage and to access support by doing so.

The RHWIs in both Aberdeen and Elgin were more effective than the practice in Fraserburgh in terms of the quality and depth of information collected and, therefore, the likelihood of identifying support needs and making an appropriate referral.

Aberdeen and Elgin are different environments in terms of size, numbers of young runaways, resources and crucially, multi-agency working processes. It is therefore difficult to compare the different RHWI models in terms of overall effectiveness and outcomes. Different models were introduced to each area; however the contexts surrounding these models varied significantly. Both models generally worked well and each had their own practical issues to contend

with. There is no clear evidence that one model is better than the other and so areas should make decisions based on what is likely to work best in their particular local circumstances - taking into account current working practices, numbers of runaways and resources. The introduction of either model should be supported by appropriate training for all involved personnel, and dedicated resources.

A number of specific research questions were set out at the start of the evaluation and the main findings in relation to these are summarised below.

1. How effective is the Return Home Welfare Interview in helping to identify children who require further support?

What proportions of RHWIs contain enough information to make a decision about referral to the appropriate agency?

- Across both Elgin and Aberdeen, the main benefit of the RHWI is that it provides an opportunity to obtain information about the young person that may not otherwise be available.
- The RHWI appeared to be less valued in cases where the young person was already involved with services (e.g. had an allocated social worker or had been reported missing from a residential unit).
- In a quarter of interviews overall, 'no issues' were identified. This may be because there were no issues of concern identified during the interview or because it was not possible to engage the young person.

What decisions about referral to support were made? Which agencies were children/young people referred to and for what type of support?

- Overall, just less than 50% of the interviews undertaken resulted in a referral to one agency; around 40% resulted in a referral to two agencies and 10% resulted in referrals to three agencies.
- 70% resulted in contact with the young person's existing social worker.
- 40% resulted in referrals to Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA).
- 25% resulted in new, or renewed, referrals to social work.
- 18% resulted in a referral to specific agencies or projects including schools, health services, Young Runaways Service and a range of independent organisations providing counselling, family and other forms of support.
- Gaps or lack of resources in other services could impact on the efficacy of RHWIs in referring young people on. In particular, the lack of services for older teenagers was identified.

Effectiveness of the RHWI in identifying young people who require further support

- Where a young person was already involved with social work services, some social work respondents were generally dubious that the RHWI could provide additional information or support.
- However, it would appear that the young person may not be in continual contact with their social worker or be engaging with services and in these cases new information could be identified.

- For young people without statutory support, the RHWI was often the first opportunity they had to discuss problems they were experiencing and allowed onward referral to social work and/or another relevant service.
- The key difference from Fraserburgh (where referrals could also be picked up via the OPS 12/1¹) was in the quality and depth of information collected leading to greater awareness of young people's circumstances.
- In addition, both RHWI teams give cards to young people with the contact details of the officer who conducted the interview. Young people are encouraged to make contact if they feel the need and this had been used and appreciated by young people.

For one month during the pilot, young people reported missing from residential units and assessed as 'Green' (defined in Standard Operating Procedures as unauthorised absence – relatively low risk indicators) were offered RHWIs. This practice did not evidence any significant benefits for these young people for a number of reasons:

- This categorisation was given where residential workers were aware of the whereabouts of the young person (i.e. late returning from a visit; overstayed time out with friends). In these circumstances, young people generally did not feel they had anything to discuss with the RHW interviewer.
- These young people were already engaged with services and were interviewed by residential unit staff on their return. The RHWI in such cases often appeared to duplicate work already carried out.
- Young people who were reported missing repeatedly would quickly be categorised at a higher risk indicator (amber or red) and subsequently came to the attention of the RHWI team. If they had already disengaged (at point of green categorisation) this could mean that they were less likely to engage with the RHWI at a point where the RHWI may have been more strategic.
- If young people in residential units were interviewed for unauthorised absence on a regular basis (for example for late return to the unit) the process of the RHWI and completion of the OPS 12/1, could result in a referral to the Reporter more quickly than some respondents felt was appropriate.

The Young Runaways Service (provided by Grampian Police and Barnardo's) is already well established in residential units in Grampian and provides an opportunity to monitor reports and responses to young people categorised as 'green'. RHWIs in this context were viewed as a potential duplication of interventions.

¹ An OPS 12/1 is a form used by the police to record information gathered in an interview and to raise any concerns that they have as a result of the interview. An OPS 12/1 is completed for all young people reported missing and interviewed by RHWI staff in the two pilot areas (Aberdeen and Elgin). An OPS 12/1 would also be completed by front line staff in cases where an investigation identified adults to be at risk and/or where there were domestic abuse concerns. The information collected in these forms is logged onto the system and passed to social work services and Scottish Children's Reporter Administration where appropriate.

2. Who is the most appropriate person to deliver an RHWI?

Views on the role of the police in RHWIs

- This evaluation examined Grampian police RHWIs and does not attempt to compare police intervention with RHWIs provided by other agencies, although acknowledging that other models exist elsewhere in the UK. There was an overall consensus across respondents in Grampian that the police were the most appropriate agency to conduct RHWIs.
- There were a number of reasons for this: the 'authority' (from a young person's perspective) that the role of police officer afforded; the fact that the police were likely to be the first agency to come into contact with a young runaway; it was felt they were able to respond more quickly (e.g. than social workers); and information would be available to the police that would not be available to other agencies which could be used to determine the potential risks to the young person.
- However, both professionals and young people agreed that it was an interviewer's ability to relate to the young person that was the most important factor – not which agency they came from.
- In general, young people felt that police uniform should not be worn when conducting RHWIs.

What is the most appropriate time to conduct an RHWI?

- There was agreement that the RHWIs should be conducted up to a few days after the young person had returned; it gives young people time to calm down but the episode is still fresh in their mind.
- Overall, 78% of RHWIs took place within seven days.
- The Aberdeen team were generally able to respond more quickly (83% of RHWIs took place within seven days) than the Elgin team (31% of RHWIs took place within seven days) – this is likely to be linked to the resources made available by a dedicated team without additional duties, and the shift-patterns in operation in Elgin.

Where is the most appropriate location to conduct a RHWI?

- Various locations were used (the family home, residential care home, school and, in Elgin, Action for Children premises; and a joint Social Work/Police facility). Police Stations were not used for RHWIs.
- No strong preferences for particular locations emerged. In many cases young people considered it to be relatively unimportant; although clearly it would depend on the circumstances of the case.

3. What are the elements of an effective process for sharing information across agencies?

Aberdeen:

- In general the information sharing process worked well.
- The OPS 12/1 form allowed RHW interviewers to both raise concerns and provide an opinion about the young person's level of risk.
- The dominant view of the social workers interviewed was that the information provided by the RHWIs was very detailed and useful, provided a

different perspective and often information about young people's families and friends which was not otherwise known.

- Police, as the lead agency, facilitated access to information which was available only to the police and not to other agencies, but which could be shared with other agencies by the RHW interviewers, as appropriate.
- As the police were the agency which looked for the young person when they were missing, they could pass on information directly to the RHWI teams about the circumstances of the young person while they were missing or immediately after they were traced.

Elgin:

- Social workers thought it was useful to know that a Community Beat Officer (CBO) was going out to see the young person, enabling the officer to assess the situation within the family and conduct the interview within this context.
- Social workers reported that information sharing between agencies was generally good, with a multi-agency Integrated Assessment Planning Meeting system in place to refer young people to services.
- Relationships with the police were generally close and co-operative, with often daily information sharing.

Fraserburgh:

- The current system means that limited information is obtained and therefore shared with other agencies; in addition there are very few agencies in the local area to which young people can be referred.
- It was the view of residential staff at two units that having a RHWI system could be valuable. It might offer an extra support strand; providing a specific police contact to liaise with unit staff about incidents of running away and to come out and talk to young people about the risks associated with running away.

What issues came to light in RHWIs that need to be shared between agencies?

- The information obtained at the RHWI was seen by those conducting the interview as having two main purposes: identifying welfare issues (which would involve sharing information on the young person's background and the issues identified in the RHWI) and intelligence gathering.
- Professional respondents indicated that the information obtained in a RHWI could provide them with a different perspective on the young person's circumstances and often contained background information about the young person's home situation, their families and friends which was not otherwise known.
- Information about where young people run to and who they spend their time with was understood to be useful in providing a context to the young person's behaviour.
- Police intelligence could be used in the potential protection of other young people (for example in cases of harbouring)
- The Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) framework identifies the importance of multi-agency information sharing. There is an underpinning principle of child protection which would over-ride issues of consent. However, it was noted that while there were potentially 'grey' areas

concerning confidentiality in relation to RHWs and information sharing between agencies, the child protection principle was considered paramount.

4. Which techniques are most appropriate for delivering RHWs?

- From the perspective of young people interviewed, the revised technique for conducting interviews in Aberdeen and Elgin was more effective at enabling them to share information than the current approach in Aberdeenshire. Young people in Aberdeenshire do not divulge as much information to operational police officers, as those in Aberdeen and in Elgin shared with RHW interviewers.

5. How effective was the pre-pilot training staff received?

- The pilot implementation was supported by detailed interactive preparatory training and a training pack for all RHW interviewers. The training outlined procedures and policy relating to RHWs, information on responding to risk and operational guidance. This was an important requirement, given that the RHWs required police officers to work in a way that differed from their traditionally investigative role, and which provided civilian workers with an understanding of police practice. Due to resource issues, the Aberdeen team received training across four days while the Elgin team received a shortened version.
- Overall, the training was seen to be useful; in particular, civilian workers appreciated information on police practice and systems, while police officers identified input on responding to welfare issues as important. Consideration of identifying and responding to 'risk' was viewed as helpful.
- The input from a young person who had experience of running away was particularly valued by both teams.
- It may have been useful to have training from the outset on child protection and information sharing (GIRFEC) procedures, however this was put in place as the pilot progressed and seemed to be appropriate as an ongoing development.

6. What evidence do RHWs collect with regard to the profile of young people who run away and how processes and services can best support them?

- As a result of the pilot, valuable data on young runaways has been collected; this would not have been otherwise available. This includes data on numbers of incidences per young person and patterns of running; demographic information on young runaways including living circumstances; reasons for running; and risks encountered while away. All of this information has the potential to inform interventions aimed at reducing the number of runaways and supporting the design of services.
- The pilot data relates to young people who are reported missing. It is noted that a significant number of young people who runaway are not reported to the police or other statutory services.

7. How did the young person experience the return home welfare interview?

- On the whole, young people interviewed for the evaluation were positive about the experience of the RHWI.
- They felt that they were listened to by the interviewer, were able to confide in them, and found it useful to be able to talk to someone about their problems.
- Most were satisfied with the location and timing of their interviews.
- The majority of interviews took place without a parent or friend present and young people were happy with this.
- However, views were mixed as to whether the interview has made them less likely to run away again.
- Most young people who took part in the evaluation were not aware of any referral having been made and were of the opinion that this was appropriate, either because they already had social work involvement or because they thought that things had improved since the incident.
- Residential staff and social workers had not had a great deal of feedback from young people, but the views they had obtained from young people on the usefulness of the RHWI were less positive than the views of the young people interviewed for the evaluation.

8. What are the differences between the different models of delivery in terms of the costs of the service and the outcomes each approach delivers?

- As with any social welfare intervention, the costs of implementation must be considered against the potential human benefits if the intervention is successful and the more immediate costs of not implementing the scheme. For example, it has been estimated that the average cost of dealing with a missing person enquiry is just over £1,000 and requires five hours of police time.
- It is very difficult to make a fair comparison between the costs of the Elgin model and the Aberdeen model. The main costs relate to staff salaries and the Aberdeen model is based on a full time team while the Elgin model is based on CBOs undertaking RHWIs as and when necessary, as part of their wider remit.
- Moreover, a simple 'cost per RHWI' calculation does not take into account the liaison work the Aberdeen team are undertaking with other agencies which is not related to specific cases. So although the Aberdeen model appears considerably more expensive, this may be justifiable on the basis that there is a significant additional element to the work of the Aberdeen team.
- These strong caveats should be borne in mind when comparing the following costs:

Average cost (staff time) per RHWI in Elgin = £123.34

Average cost (staff time) per RHWI in Aberdeen = £207.69.

Implications for development

As with any new initiative, a number of issues should be considered relating to the potential implementation of this service elsewhere:

- The existing infrastructure of resources in Elgin and Aberdeen was important for the introduction of the RHWI - information on the scale and nature of running away by young people had been considered and responses already developed (i.e. Young Runaways Service)
- Training provided was crucial in informing civilian workers about police processes; and supporting police workers to identify and address welfare issues in conjunction with intelligence gathering.
- Implementing the initiative required good interagency communication and consultation to secure buy-in from local stakeholders. This can be a time-consuming process but was necessary in securing effective referral processes to support young people.

INTRODUCTION

This Report provides an evaluation of the Grampian Police pilot project delivering Return Home Welfare Interviews (RHWIs) to young runaways in the Grampian area. This report covers the evaluation time-frame (from the start date 26 March to 1 April 2010²). The work has been guided by an Evaluation Sub-Group consisting of representatives from the Scottish Government, Grampian Police and the Scottish Coalition for Young Runaways.

For the purposes of both the pilot and evaluation, a young runaway is defined as:

“A child or young person, under the age of 16, who is absent from their domicile without the reasonable authority of those responsible for, or in charge of, them and who needs a service either to find and return them to that place (where it is safe or in the child’s interests to do so) or to a) keep them safe b) ensure an appropriate and proportionate response to their needs c) meet statutory obligations. Children between the ages of 16 and 18 will be included in this definition when a) they have a history of running away which predates their 16th birthday or b) they are looked after, or looked after and accommodated” (Grampian Police Training Pack).

The overall aim of this evaluation is to explore the most effective means of delivering RHWIs to ensure the best outcomes for the child/young person. It sets out to examine the operation of the pilot as implemented across two Divisions of Grampian Police (Aberdeen City and Moray³) to reflect the range of models of delivery used and the overall impact of the pilot. One area in Aberdeenshire (Fraserburgh)⁴ forms the control area to illustrate original practice in Grampian and current practice outwith the pilot areas. The report describes the differences between the RHWI and practice of noting cancellation details which the RHWIs replace in the two pilot areas.

BACKGROUND TO PILOT

In recent years, the number of children and young people running away from home or from local authority care has been identified as a Scotland-wide problem by the Scottish Government, local authorities and the voluntary sector (Scottish Executive, 2003). This reflects growing awareness of this problem in England and Wales (e.g. Safe on the Streets Research Team, 1999; Social Exclusion Unit, 2002; Rees and Lee, 2005). Research conducted by Wade (2001) *Missing Out-Young Runaways in Scotland*, commissioned by the Aberlour Child Care Trust, demonstrated the contexts from which young people ran, the risks they faced on running and the numbers who ran away in Scotland. Wade (2001) indicated that on average, 9000 children and young people in Scotland run away

² Statistical data was collected from 26 March-26 December 2009.

³ In Moray, the RHWI is being conducted in one area, Elgin.

⁴ Fraserburgh was chosen as the control area for the evaluation based on the number of reported incidences of running across the Division.

each year. While there is inconsistency in rates of reporting and recording incidents of running away (see Malloch and Burgess, 2007) police figures prior to the pilot implementation (2007-8 financial year) show that 470 young people were reported to have run away in Grampian, accounting for a total of 1321 incidences of running⁵.

Following the commission of a Scoping Study which examined the responses of Area Child Protection Committees and local authorities across Scotland to young runaways (Malloch and Burgess, 2007)⁶ a National Multi-agency Working Group was established to develop recommendations for strategic action on the issue of young people running away. One of the eight recommendations reported to, and accepted by, Ministers in spring 2008 related to the effective delivery of RHWIs for young runaways, specifically, the delivery of a national pilot which would identify best practice in this area.

Grampian Police had recognised the need for a service for young runaways prior to the implementation of this pilot. As a result of concerns by Grampian Police about the risks facing young people who run away from residential units, residential school and foster care, a study was carried out by Barnardo's which identified that during 1999, Grampian Police dealt with 897 reports of missing people under the age of 18. Furthermore, two-thirds of the reports related to 89 young people who had run from residential units, with each report averaging five hours of police time (Barnardo's information)⁷. Consequently, a multi-agency group was established (including the police, social work department and Barnardo's along with other agencies) to set up a city wide protocol which would operate for young people reported missing from local authority accommodation. A dedicated service was established to provide a resource to which young people could be referred. The Young Runaways Service (YRS) is a joint initiative between Grampian Police and Barnardo's aimed at increasing the safety and reducing the number of, young people accommodated in residential units, residential school and foster care in Aberdeen who run away. The YRS subsequently extended their provision to include young people who run from home⁸.

The RHWI pilot was thus introduced to Grampian, where there was already recognition of the need and importance of responding to young runaways, a

⁵ These are recorded incidents of missing person reports relating to young people. For the purpose of this evaluation, young runaways are determined by missing person reports. The problems of definitions across agencies are significant (see Malloch and Burgess, 2007). It is also acknowledged that the majority of young people who runaway are not reported missing to the police or other statutory services.

⁶ An examination of responses to young runaways in England was also published in 2007 (The Children's Society, 2007).

⁷ The financial cost to the police of carrying out this work is considerable. ACPOS estimated that a yearly cost to the Scottish police was £5.4 million, equivalent to 14,178 days of Police time (ACPOS information provided to the Scottish Coalition for Young Runaways, 2006)

⁸ Grampian Police also have a Youth Justice Management Unit (YJMU) and an Early Intervention officer located in their Anti-Social Behaviour Unit, with both providing a dedicated service to young people. Close liaison between these units, the Young Runaways Service and the RHWI pilot was anticipated from the outset.

service in place based on joint agency work, and expertise in this area⁹. The geographical layout of Grampian also provided an opportunity to consider different issues arising across areas, rural and urban, as well as distinct models of intervention reflected in diverse practice across police divisions. The evaluation considered the models in operation in Aberdeen, Elgin and Fraserburgh, three distinct areas served by Grampian Police. These distinctions are evident from an overview of the areas:

Aberdeen

Aberdeen is Scotland's third largest city with a population of 210,400 (as of June 2008). It has a large thriving port and a prosperous economy based on industry, tourism and commerce. Aberdeen has two universities, twelve secondary schools and fifty-four primary schools. It has a wide range of sporting and cultural facilities and is served by a number of statutory and voluntary agencies providing support to young people and their families. This includes community-based Family Centres, and both general and specific counselling services to help young people affected by issues such as abuse and domestic violence. There are a range of organised activities for young people across the city and a Youth Action Committee to promote the use of youth groups and other youth activities.

Elgin

Elgin is an historic market town, one of the largest in the Moray Council area, with a population of 19,251 (as of June 2008). There are 1,314 children and young people in the 10-15 year age range. Elgin is a quiet and attractive town and its economy is based on tourism, commerce and the service industry. The shopping centre is a busy one and serves nearby towns such as Lossiemouth. There are good transport links (train and bus) to Forres and Nairn, which also have a range of services and facilities. Inverness is forty miles away. Elgin is fairly well-served with activities for young people and has a leisure centre, youth groups and a cinema. Moray College has a site in Elgin and there are two secondary schools and four primary schools.

Fraserburgh

Fraserburgh is a fishing and industrial port situated in the north-eastern tip of Aberdeenshire, forty miles north of Aberdeen. Its population is around 12,600 (as of June 2006). The town is quiet and the shops are limited in number and range. The port brings seamen from across the world which gives the town a cosmopolitan air and it is known to be welcoming to 'outsiders'. However, it is also known for its disproportionately serious problem of drug use. Banff and Buchan College has a site in the town and there is one secondary school, one special school and four primary schools. There are few services and activities for young people, although there are some sports facilities and a skate park. There is no train service but there is a bus which runs to Aberdeen and along the coast to Buckie and then on to Inverness.

⁹ While other initiatives employing RHWIs have involved independent organisations in the delivery of RHWIs, this evaluation compares the different models delivered by Grampian Police.

RESPONDING TO YOUNG RUNAWAYS: PRACTICE IN EACH AREA

The different environments and size of the locales have influenced the different interventions which are in place for responding to young runaways, as has the availability of relevant resources. Across all the areas, when a child or young person runs away, they are likely to come to the attention of Grampian Police through a missing person (misper) report. All calls to the police now go directly to the Grampian Police Service Centre where a misper report will be generated automatically. This removes previous discretion which existed when the first point of contact was the local police station.

Control area (Fraserburgh) and current practice outwith the pilot areas¹⁰

When the young person is located, a cancellation process is instituted. This can take place at any time, often in the early hours of the morning. The young person will be taken home (unless child protection concerns determine otherwise) and the returning officer (or if they return of their own accord, any available officer) will conduct a cancellation form (OPS 5/7). This form is generally completed in front of parents/carers or staff in a residential unit. It is a lengthy form, with more than 50 questions, and is used for all missing persons regardless of age.

In situations where the police officer responsible for the cancellation process believes there are concerns for the wellbeing of the young person or areas requiring intervention, a form detailing these concerns and collecting appropriate information (Form OPS 12/1)¹¹ would be completed and forwarded to the Family Protection Unit (FPU)¹² and subsequently passed to social work services and/or to the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) for screening. If further action was required, a request would be made for social work services to prepare an Initial Assessment Report. This process is dependent on the young person disclosing information that can be taken forward to other agencies as appropriate¹³ (see Annex One for flowchart). In the case of a young person reported missing from residential care, a Form OPS 5/7a would be completed by a residential worker.

Risk assessment procedures

At the core of 'Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons'¹⁴ produced for the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) is

¹⁰ Current practice in Aberdeenshire and divisions in Moray (other than Elgin).

¹¹ An OPS 12/1 would also be completed by front line staff in cases where an investigation identified adults to be at risk and/or where there were domestic abuse concerns. The information collected in these forms is logged onto the system and passed to social work services and Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) where appropriate. An OPS 12/1 is completed for all young people reported missing and interviewed by RHWI staff in the two pilot areas (Aberdeen and Elgin).

¹² This unit was referred to by social work respondents as the Joint Protection Unit (JPU) – we refer to FPU for consistency.

¹³ The RHWI was intended to provide a more conducive method of obtaining a greater depth and quality of information than the process of noting cancellation details in this way.

¹⁴ ACPO Centre for Excellence (2005) Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons

the risk assessment information for classifying missing persons into three categories – high, medium, low risk.

Table 1: Classification of risk and response¹⁵

High risk	
The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the subject is in danger through their own vulnerability; or may have been the victim of a serious crime; or the risk posed is immediate and there is grounds for believing the public may be in danger	This category requires the immediate deployment of police resources and a member of Basic Command Unit senior management team or similar command level must be involved in the examination of initial enquiry lines and approval of staffing levels. Such cases should lead to the appointment of a Senior Investigating Officer. There should be a press/media strategy and/or close contact with outside agencies
Medium risk	
The risk posed is likely to place the subject in danger or they are a threat to themselves or others.	This category requires an active and measured response by police and other agencies in order to trace the missing person and support the person reporting
Low risk	
There is no apparent threat of danger to either the subject or the public	In addition to recording the information on the Police National Computer, the police will advise the person reporting the disappearance that following basic enquiries and unless circumstances change, further active enquiries will not be carried out by the police. The missing person's details will be passed to the National Missing Person's Helpline (NMPH) in line with the national protocol. Low risk missing persons, however, must be kept under review as risk can increase with the passage of time.

In cases where a young person is reported missing from home, the police officer receiving the call makes a judgement about the level of risk based on the available information; recording the level of risk as 'low', 'medium' or 'high'. Actions appropriate to this grading will then be undertaken by the police¹⁶. In the case of young people reported missing from residential units there is a

¹⁵ Extracted from ACPO Centre for Excellence (2005) 2005 – p19.

¹⁶ See Scottish Government guidance (2009)

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/02/27152211/27> which sets out: the Roles and Responsibilities of ACPO and the Scottish Police Service in Investigating Missing Children.

detailed document: the Grampian Police 'Young Person Missing from Residential Establishments - Standard Operating Procedures' which sets out the criteria within which the risks for the young person will be assessed. There is also an agreed protocol for young people reported missing from foster care placements.

Residential workers undertake a risk assessment for each young person accommodated in a residential unit which includes information about any previous history of running away or going missing. Should a young person go missing, this information and any additional factors relating to the immediate circumstances which may have contributed to the incident will be taken into account when an assessment of risk is made. This is translated into the three categories of risk and agency response used by residential units, known as the 'RAG' or Red, Amber or Green grading¹⁷. This system is generally considered to work well although it is reported that there is not always agreement between residential staff and police officers about the level of risk. On occasion, residential staff will grade the risk as being at a higher level than do police officers. When this occurs, negotiation or further discussion generally takes place at police sergeant level and agreement can usually be reached, however this can cause difficulties in inter-agency collaboration if there are difficulties reaching a compromise.

Pilot areas (Elgin and Aberdeen)

The introduction of the pilot RHWIs has enabled dedicated interview teams to gather relevant information on the young person and missing incident and to speak with the young person in order to identify any factors that prompted them to run or incidents which happened while they were away. At the point where a missing young person is traced in both pilot areas, a 'safe and well' check will be undertaken by an operational police officer. This is a visual check to ensure the young person is safe and well; if necessary, a referral will be made to the FPU at this point. The young person will be informed that a RHWI will be arranged. Initial contact will be made within five working days and the RHWI should take place as soon as possible after the initial contact. The RHW interviewer will check the information recorded on the missing person file and any action taken as a result, and will look out for any issues arising from the Safe and Well check. Standard checks are made by the RHWI Co-ordinator on police databases (Crimefile, Scottish Intelligence Database, STORM, child protection register) and with other relevant units (YJMU, FPU, Anti-social behaviour unit, Domestic Abuse Liaison). The RHWI is voluntary, young people are not obliged to attend, but every effort is made to provide them with the opportunity to do so. The principles underpinning RHWIs are set out in the Interim Guidance Document for the pilot which indicates that "the paramount consideration is the welfare of the child or young person" and emphasises:

- Collaboration and information-sharing between agencies and professionals;
- Shared accountability between agencies for decisions made and actions taken;

¹⁷ RHWIs are conducted for young people identified as Amber or Red, however RHWIs were conducted for one month in 2009 for young people identified as Green. This aimed to examine the potential benefits of intervening with this group of young people.

- The views of children and young people will be sought and taken into consideration;
- The need to ensure community wellbeing through the reduction of antisocial behaviour”.

Elgin

In Moray, Elgin was selected as the pilot site with four Community Beat Officers (CBOs) performing this task alongside other operational responsibilities¹⁸. The CBOs perform a number of community-based, liaison tasks in addition to the RHWI pilot. They are supported by the RHWI Co-ordinator, based in Aberdeen, who provides background information collated from police databases. A nominated CBO will be allocated the task of conducting the RHWI. As CBOs work shifts, this can depend on availability and work allocation. The CBO will contact the young person and arrange for a RHWI to take place at the young person’s home, school or other appropriate premises (the team have access to premises operated by Action for Children, and a joint police/social work resource which can be used as a ‘neutral’ venue). Although uniformed officers, the CBOs can conduct the RHWI in plain clothes as appropriate. On completion of the RHWI, the CBO will complete an OPS 12/1 based on the information disclosed during the interview. CBOs do not generally make direct referrals, but will instead identify any needs during the interview and will ensure they are flagged up when the OPS 12/1 is completed. They will also give young people information on other agencies as appropriate¹⁹; they can distribute cards with contact details for local services and their own contact details²⁰. Completed OPS 12/1s will be forwarded to the FPU who will then share the information with health, education and voluntary organisations at a pre-screening group (Local Integrated Assessment Planning Meeting); an initiative which was already in place in Elgin prior to the introduction of the pilot (see Annex One for flowchart).

Aberdeen

A dedicated team was established in Aberdeen City for the specific purpose of conducting the RHWI. Based in the main police station in the city (and located alongside the Young Runaways Service), the team consists of two civilian employees (a co-ordinator and interviewer) and one seconded police officer. They work office hours (8-4 on weekdays with flexibility to fit with young people’s availability) and will respond to all missing person reports (on young people under 16 years of age, or 18 where appropriate) in Aberdeen city. For each case, the RHWI Co-ordinator will collate existing data from police information systems (and other agencies as appropriate) and pass this on to the two RHW interviewers. As soon as possible after the young person returns/is returned to the place where they were living, the RHW interviewers will make contact to arrange a RHWI. The interviewers wear civilian clothes and will arrange to meet the young person at a place deemed appropriate by both the

¹⁸ It was initially intended that a dedicated worker would perform this task, but this role was subsequently shared by a small team of CBOs.

¹⁹ This is likely to mean that service take-up by these young people will be recorded by other agencies as self-referrals rather than counting as direct referrals resulting from the RHWI.

²⁰ Contact phone and email details go direct to the Service Centre rather than to the local police station.

young person and the RHW interviewer. The Aberdeen RHWI team may make direct referrals to appropriate agencies after speaking with the young person, in addition to completing an OPS 12/1 following the interview. This form is forwarded to the FPU and in turn, to social work services and/or SCRA. If the young person is currently allocated a social worker, the RHWI Co-ordinator will attempt to notify them of any changes in the young persons' circumstances, and may also contact other agencies if considered appropriate (e.g. the school). The Aberdeen team also provide young people with a contact card and will hand out leaflets for other agencies as required (see Annex One for flowchart).

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The key areas which the evaluation addresses are to:

- Examine the effectiveness of the RHWI in helping to identify children who require further support;
- Identify factors that facilitated successful delivery of the different models of RHWI across the two pilot areas, and those factors that posed barriers;
- Assess the impact of the RHWI on the perceptions and experiences of the child/young person, including what elements of the RHWI are considered to be most and least useful and successful by those involved;
- Assess the effectiveness of the pre-pilot training in equipping staff to conduct RHWIs;
- Examine the information collected in RHWIs regarding the profile of young people who run away and the processes and services that could best support them;
- Assess the effectiveness of the RHWI for referring young people and/or families on to suitable support services by providing sufficient information to help identify children and/or families who need further support;
- Explore the views of the child/young person in terms of satisfaction with any support provided as a result of RHWIs and any further incidences of running away within the pilot period;
- Identify and quantify any differences between the different models of delivery in terms of the costs of the service and the outcomes each approach delivers.

METHODOLOGY

To address the research objectives effectively both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. More specifically, the evaluation comprised:

- documentation analysis
- statistical data collection on incidences of young people running away
- semi-structured interviews with the RHWI teams in Elgin and Aberdeen and other officers within Grampian police; key stakeholders; and young people who ran away during the pilot

- case studies
- cost analysis

Details on each strand of the evaluation are provided in the remainder of this section.

Documentary analysis

Relevant literature and research reports²¹ were collated to provide a brief review of work already undertaken in this field of study, and with relevance to the RHWI pilot. This was used to inform research tools designed for this evaluation; in particular, the issues explored with key stakeholders (for example, where we have set out to identify potential barriers to supporting young runaways and identified good practice). The review was also used to contextualise findings contained in this report and where appropriate we have made comparisons with the findings from similar pilots or interventions implemented elsewhere in the UK.

Statistical data collection

Baseline data

Grampian police data on the number of young people running away and the number of incidences of young people running away reported during the year prior to the pilot were collated to establish a baseline against which corresponding pilot data could be compared²².

Monitoring data collection

Monitoring data was collected for all missing young person reports received between 26 March and 26 December 2009. A system of data collection was agreed upon between the research team and the RHWI co-ordinator to provide a profile of young people who run away in the two pilot areas (Aberdeen City and Elgin). The system was designed so that it was practical for the RHWI team and which assisted the research team's understanding of cases, and the process and outcomes of different responses.

For each young person referred to the RHWI teams in Aberdeen or Elgin, a case file was created by the team co-ordinator. Each case file consisted of:

- **Demographic information:** sex; date of birth; ethnicity; and living arrangements.
- **Information screened from existing police systems:** data checks were undertaken on the Police National Computer (PNC); Scottish Intelligence Database (SID); Domestic Abuse Liaison Officer (DALO); Family Protection Unit (FPU); Crimefile; and the Youth Justice Management Unit (YJMU). Any information on these systems available on the young person was recorded on the case files.
- **Information related to each missing incident reported:** time and date of missing report; person who instigated missing report; risk

²¹ See p62 for a list of references.

²² While the time-frame of data collection varies (pre and post pilot), we have made this explicit where direct comparisons are made between these two periods of time.

grading; time and date young person was last seen; where young person went missing from; whether young person was traced or returned and the time and date of this; and details of the safe and well check.

- **Information related to each RHWI undertaken:** arranged interview date; actual interview date; interview location; ID of interviewer; interview duration; main reason for going missing; risk encountered whilst away; main need identified; subsequent referral information; and interviewers noted from the interview.

All case files created throughout the evaluation were anonymised and transferred to the evaluation team for analysis.

For all cases referred to the control area, Fraserburgh, the iKAP (improvement through knowledge and performance) system was used. This was used to identify the numbers of young people reported missing and the numbers of missing incidences; however it does not contain sufficient detail to explore differences in cases or in the process and outcomes of referrals within Fraserburgh.

Analysis of data

An SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) file was constructed for the purposes of inputting and analysing the case files received from the RHWI teams and the information extracted from the iKAP system. This file consisted of all missing incidents that were reported to the police across the three areas during the data collection period (so for example, young people who were reported missing twice during this period were inputted twice in the file).

A random check of 10% of entered incidences was undertaken by the research team. Furthermore, a series of checks on the internal coherence of the data were undertaken to identify any apparent errors in the original recording or input of the data²³. Where core or substantial proportions of case data were missing, queries were raised with the RHWI teams and supplementary data was added where possible. We have identified in the analysis that follows where datasets are incomplete.

Once the SPSS file was finalised, the file was reconstructed into two additional formats: (a) a dataset consisting of the number of young people who were reported missing during the data collection period and (b) a dataset of RHWIs undertaken during the data collection period. Using the finalised datasets, frequency tables were produced for each variable that was inputted broken down by the two pilot areas and the control area. Where appropriate the results of this analysis have been integrated into the main body of the report while the full set of tables produced have been provided in Annex Two.²⁴

²³ For example, the timescales between the time and date of missing person report and the time and date the young person was last seen were calculated. Any negative values derived from the calculation meant that the young person was last seen at a date after the time and date of they were reported missing.

²⁴ Further information on coding is provided in Annex Three.

Semi-structured interviews

A total of 64 semi-structured interviews (four respondents were interviewed twice) were conducted across the three areas with professional respondents and RHW interviewers.

In total 22 young people took part in the evaluation (see Table 2 for breakdown by area); there were 16 females and six males interviewed. Only five of the 27 young people for whom consent forms were received declined to be interviewed or were uncontactable. All research tools (interview schedules, consent form and information sheets were designed by the research team and approved by the Evaluation Sub-Group).²⁵

Table 2 summarises the number of interviews conducted in each area and the number of interviews conducted with each audience.

Table 2: Interviews conducted during the evaluation

Audience	Aberdeen City	Elgin	Fraserburgh
<i>Grampian police</i>			
RHWI teams	7 ²⁶	6 ²⁷	
Other officers	3		3
<i>Key stakeholders</i>			
Residential unit staff ²⁸	3	2	2
Social work staff	3	3	2
Voluntary organisation staff	5	1	
Guidance teachers	2		
Young people	14	5	3
Total	37	17	10

Scoping

Training

A member of the research team attended part of the training provided to the Aberdeen RHWI team in March 2009. This provided an opportunity to have formal and informal discussion with training providers and recipients aimed at identifying perceptions of the training experience and its relevance. While it was intended that joint training take place (with both the Aberdeen and Elgin teams),

²⁵ Copies of all research tools are available on request from the research team.

²⁶ The Aberdeen RHWI team (including the co-ordinator) were interviewed on two occasions with their line manager interviewed on one occasion.

²⁷ In Elgin, one RHW interviewer and line-manager were interviewed at the start of the evaluation; 3 RHW interviews and a different line-manager were interviewed towards the end of the evaluation.

²⁸ One respondent was interviewed on two occasions, all other respondents were interviewed once.

the team from Elgin were unable to attend the initial training and separate events took place, although with similar structure and content. The research team did not attend the Elgin training, nor did an external speaker (from the Scottish Coalition for Young Runaways who had provided training for the Aberdeen team) so there was limited opportunity to compare and contrast the training itself or differences in how it was received by the teams. A comprehensive training pack, made available to the research team, was provided to both RHWI teams. This was used to support the training process and consisted of a range of relevant material (see Annex Four).

Subsequent interviews with the RHWI teams examined perceptions of the effectiveness of the pre-pilot training staff received, any gaps identified in the training, and areas which could help with future training provision.

Interviews with professionals

Grampian police

Members of the RHWI teams in Aberdeen City and Elgin were interviewed both at the beginning and near the end of the pilot. This allowed for both their initial expectations and their actual experiences of the pilot to be explored. In Aberdeen City, the RHWI Co-ordinator and the two RHW interviewers were all interviewed twice and their sergeant was interviewed once towards the end of the pilot. In Elgin, one RHW interviewer and one sergeant were interviewed in the early stages of the pilot and three RHWI interviewers and a different sergeant were interviewed at the end of the pilot. One police officer from Aberdeenshire was interviewed at the beginning of the pilot to gather views on current practice, two (from Fraserburgh) were interviewed towards the end of the pilot.

All interviews with Aberdeen and Elgin RHW interviewers were conducted face to face and were recorded and transcribed; permission was granted by respondents. The police officer from Aberdeenshire was also interviewed face to face; with the two officers from Fraserburgh interviewed by telephone.

Key stakeholders

Initial scoping interviews were undertaken with the individuals who were closely involved with setting up the pilot in order to clarify the RHWI processes, to map the main agencies involved at different stages of the process. This information was helpful in identifying the most relevant social work and residential staff to interview.

Qualitative interviews took place throughout the course of the pilot with a range of relevant stakeholders; including representatives from social work services, residential units, schools and voluntary organisations. Where individual respondents agreed, the interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Managers of residential units in Elgin and Aberdeen City were interviewed by telephone at the beginning of the pilot to identify issues relating to the implementation and operation of the pilot in relation to young people who run from (or are subsequently admitted to) residential units. Residential workers from across the three areas were also interviewed face to face towards the end of

the pilot. Workers interviewed at this stage differed from those interviewed at the beginning of the pilot, apart from one residential unit worker who was interviewed on two occasions.

Social work staff who had been involved with the pilot were interviewed. These respondents tended to be working with young people who had taken part in a RHWI. They were identified through case notes, information provided by the RHWI Co-ordinator and contacts from social work link staff. All interviews were conducted face to face and explored views on all aspects of the pilot.

As one of the key features of the RHWI pilot was to ensure that young people were referred on to relevant agencies, it was important to gather the views of those who received referrals through the pilot. Six voluntary organisation respondents and two school guidance teachers were interviewed. The interviews were conducted by telephone in the latter stages of the pilot and focused on the appropriateness of referrals received and the effectiveness of the referrals process.

Interviews with young people

As shown in Table 2 above, 22 young people across the three Divisions were interviewed to identify their views and experiences of the RHWI (and unchanged practice in Fraserburgh) and, where possible, to assess short-term outcomes following this. Broadly in line with the number of incidences of running away in each area, fourteen interviews took place with young people in Aberdeen, five in Elgin and three in Fraserburgh. Sixteen of the interviews were with females and six were with males; this reflects the higher instance of females running away during the pilot.

In Aberdeen City and Elgin, all young people who attended a RHWI were given the opportunity to take part in the research. In both areas, RHWI interviewers informed the young person about the evaluation and asked them to complete a consent form if they were willing to participate. In Elgin, interviewers generally returned the form when completed by the young person whereas in Aberdeen young people tended to return the completed consent forms directly to the evaluation team in a postage paid, pre-addressed envelope.

In Fraserburgh, the RHWI Co-ordinator wrote to young people who had been the subject of a cancellation interview to inform them about the evaluation and invite them to take part. Those wishing to participate completed the consent form, which was enclosed with the letter and returned it to the evaluation team in a pre-paid envelope. In all areas, the research team contacted the young person directly to arrange the interview upon receipt of the consent form.

Of the 27 young people for whom consent forms were received, five declined to be interviewed or were uncontactable. One young person was interviewed in person within the secure unit in which she had been placed and all other interviews were completed by telephone.

In some cases young people gave very full answers to the questions posed by researchers while others were more reticent. Interviews were recorded and transcribed where the young person gave permission. Where the respondent was reluctant to have the interview recorded, or did not give permission, notes were taken.

Young people who took part in the evaluation received a £10 voucher. This was partly to ensure participation from as wide a range of young runaways as possible but it also recognised that they had given up their free time to help with the research and may have incurred some costs (e.g. mobile phone charges) in the processes of arranging the interview²⁹.

Although the incentive was partly designed to ensure representation from a wide range of young runaways, the opt-in nature of the research meant that those who participated were not necessarily representative of all young people who had RHWIs. It is possible that those who participated were those who felt most positive about the experience and were most engaged with the process. Furthermore, it is possible that young people who continued to experience serious personal problems in their lives may not have felt able to participate in the research.

Case-studies

In order to illustrate indicative experiences of young people who met the criteria for RHWIs, anonymised case studies were devised (see Annex Five). Representative illustrations of young people's experiences were used for the case studies which encompass the experiences of young people living at home and in residential units; and includes examples of the experiences of young people, some of whom were, and others who were not, previously involved with services. These case studies offer a contextualisation of young people's experiences of running away by way of background information about their circumstances and previous involvement with services, their views on the RHWI experience and (where relevant) an indication of their pathway through subsequent services.

Cost analysis

The cost analysis was based on salary information provided by Grampian Police; a record (over eight months between March and November 2009) of the time spent by Elgin officers on each case (recorded in case files by the officers and collated by the Co-ordinator); and detailed timesheets, completed by the Co-ordinator for the purposes of the evaluation, over 14 weeks between November 2009 and February 2010. We had initially hoped that the Aberdeen RHW interviewers would also be able to complete detailed timesheets, which would have enabled us to analyse the time spent on different elements of the work (e.g. the average time spent on preparing for an interview, undertaking an interview, undertaking follow-up work, and wider liaison/development work with other agencies). Unfortunately, it was not possible to obtain this information³⁰.

²⁹ If the interview itself was conducted by phone the costs would, of course, be incurred by the research team.

³⁰ See Annex Six for cost calculations.

FINDINGS

Profile of young People³¹

- There were 459 missing incidents during the pilot period: 376 in Aberdeen, 38 in Elgin and 45 in Fraserburgh
- The 459 incidents involved 176 young people
- 67% of young people were reported missing once (60%) or twice (17%) but 11% were reported missing more than five times and one young person accounted for 29 incidents
- Most incidents involved 13-15 year olds
- 63% of incidents involved girls
- More young people living at home were reported missing but more young people in care were reported missing repeatedly

A total of 459 missing incidents were reported during the pilot evaluation period (statistical data collected from 26th March -26th December 2009), involving 176 young people; 85 boys and 91 girls. Three hundred and seventy-six incidents were recorded in the Aberdeen area, 38 in the Elgin area, and 45 in the Fraserburgh area. More missing incidents involved girls than boys, with girls accounting for 63% of the total 459. This pattern holds for each of the areas, with two thirds of incidents in Aberdeen involving girls³² and around three quarters in Elgin and Fraserburgh respectively. A majority of the total missing incidents involved young people in their teens, with 19% involving 13 year olds, 29% involving 14 year olds, and 36% involving 15 year olds. Five per cent involved children under the age of 11³³. This pattern was similar for each of the areas. Missing incidences that involved children under the age of 12 were more likely to involve boys than girls, and missing incidences from age 13 onwards were

³¹ See Annex Two for more statistical data.

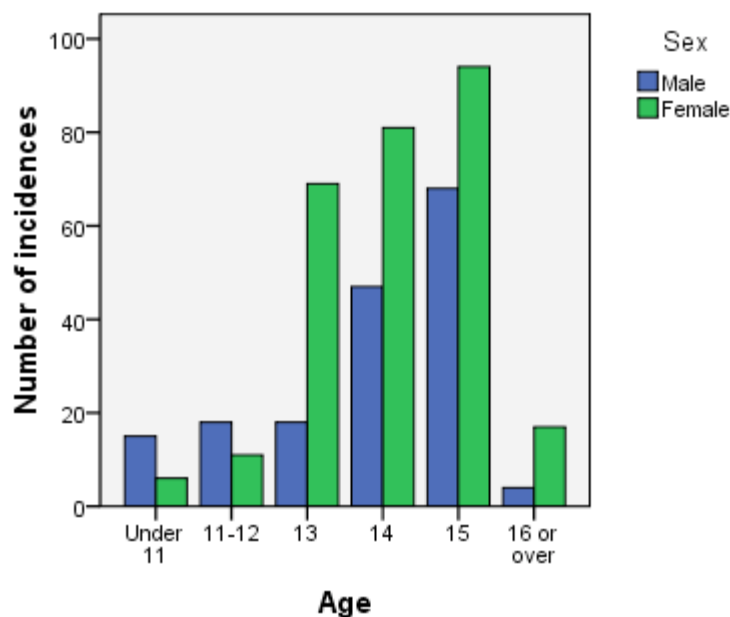
³² Although in relation to actual numbers of young people, the number of young males was higher in Aberdeen: see Annex Two, Table 3. While this is not consistent with national research, this experience is shared by Astra (2006).

³³ In Elgin and Aberdeen 11 young people were aged 10 or under at the point they were reported missing. Of these young people, six were boys and five were girls and the youngest was aged six. The majority (9) of these young people were reported missing once during the pilot while one young person was reported missing twice and another was reported missing nine times. Ten of these young people lived with their family; one was in foster care and one young person's living arrangements alternated between family and foster care during the course of the pilot.

In terms of the circumstances that these young people went missing in: three cases involved children who had lost track of time and had not meant to be out late; two cases involved children who went out without their parents' permission to spend time with friends; three children had run away because of issues experienced in school. A further incident involved a child who had hidden in a relative's house. The rest of the cases involved children who appeared to be dealing with significant difficulties in their lives.

more likely to involve girls than boys, as illustrated in Figure 1 (findings similar to Rees and Smeaton, 2001). Overall, the incidences were almost evenly split between young people reported missing from home and young people missing from care (residential, foster or kinship); of the 454 where information is available, 198 incidences involved young people living at home and 256 involved young people living in care. However, from the analysis of data on young people it is clear that more young people living at home were reported missing while more young people who were looked after and accommodated were reported missing repeatedly.

Figure 1 Relationship between age and sex



The 459 incidences involved a total of 176 children and young people. As Table 3 illustrates, 60% of the children and young people were reported only once in the pilot period, 17% were reported twice, and 6% were reported three times. Eleven per cent of young people were reported missing more than five times. The highest number of incidences reported for one young person was 29.

Table 3: Reported incident and living circumstances

Number of times reported missing in pilot period	Living at home	Living in care	Total
1	85	18	103
2	23	7	30
3	7	3	10
4	3	2	5
5	4	1	5
5 or more	8	11	19
Total interviews	130	42	172

Data missing for 4 young people

Detailed data on young people in Fraserburgh is not available due to different data collection systems in place outwith the pilot areas. This illustrates the depth of data available on young runaways as a result of the pilot itself. In the pilot areas, it was possible to collect in-depth data regarding the missing incidences as part of the case management processes put in place by the RHWI Co-ordinator. In the control area, data was electronically extracted from existing management information systems. This data was used to construct three samples for the purpose of analysis: a sample of all incidents reported during the pilot period; a sample of the young people who were the subject of those incident reports; and the interviews that were undertaken in the two pilot areas.

Characteristics of young people in pilot areas

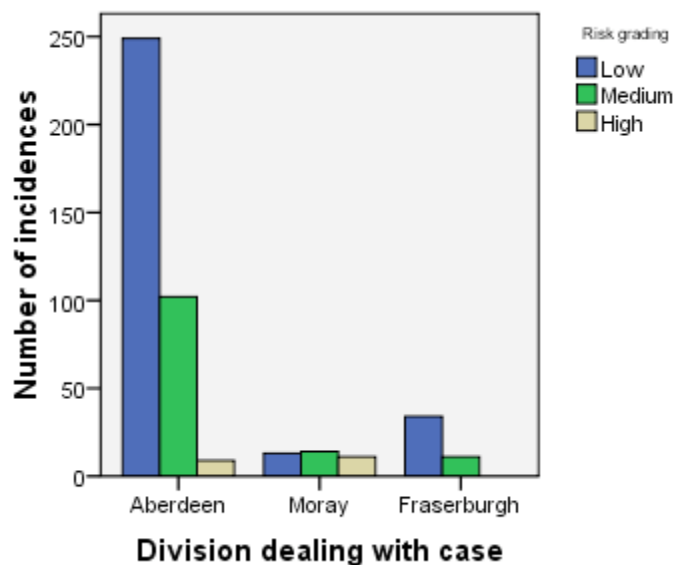
During the course of the statistical data collection period (26 March – 26 December) there were 414 reported missing incidences relating to 158 young people in Aberdeen City and Elgin. In keeping with the operational protocol, RHWIs were not necessarily completed for every missing incident (e.g. if a young person had run away more than once in a short space of time then a RHWI could cover more than one incident). Sixty six of these (414) incidences (involving 33 young people) did not result in a RHWI. However, 20 of these 33 young people did attend a RHWI in relation to a missing incident³⁴. Fourteen young people did not attend an interview at any point during the course of the pilot³⁵. In addition to ongoing attempts to encourage a young person to attend a RHWI, a letter was devised by the RHWI Co-ordinator which was sent out to young people and their parents/carers in circumstances where there was believed to be ‘active avoidance’ of the RHWI team. The RHWI interviewers were of the view that persistence was crucial in attempting to contact young people, but would also respect the young person’s wish if they continually refused to engage.

³⁴ Of these 20 young people, 17 resided in Aberdeen City and three in Elgin. The RHWI team decided not to conduct an interview in two of these cases; one involved a young person who had received a very extensive interview from a police officer which resulted in the officer submitting an OPS 12/1 form; and in the other case the team were advised by social work that the young person was very happy in their new foster care and that a RHWI might be counter productive. For the rest of the cases, the young person either refused to further engage with the RHWI team or failed to show up.

³⁵ Most of the 14 young people - 11 young people in Aberdeen and 3 young people in Elgin - who did not attend an interview at any point during the course of pilot were reported missing once during that period. Only three were reported missing more than once, one of whom was reported five times and the other two on two occasions each. The reasons differed as to why these 14 young people did not attend an interview at any point. In three cases it appears that the young people had moved outside the boundaries of the pilot areas. In a further three cases a decision was taken that an interview should not be conducted as it may compromise a criminal investigation. In the remaining seven cases, it appears that the young people chose not to engage with the RHWI teams – in some of these cases it was not possible to make contact with the young person and in each of these cases a letter was sent to the young person offering a RHWI in addition to other efforts to make contact.

Figure 2 illustrates the risk grading allocated to the missing person reports received within the pilot evaluation period³⁶. Within the control area, no incidences were graded as 'high' risk and within the pilot areas there were differences in the proportion of incidences graded as 'high' risk – in Elgin about a third of all the reports were graded as high risk and in Aberdeen a very small proportion were (2.5%). In both Elgin and Aberdeen, there were children under the age of 11 who were reported missing and who were not coded as 'high' risk.

Figure 2 Risk grading of missing person reports during the pilot period



Reasons identified for running away

Reasons for running identified during RHWIs were linked to:

- **Boundaries** (identified in 80 interviews) included staying out beyond a curfew or taking part in an activity (e.g. attending a party, drinking, camping) that the young person considered unlikely to be approved of by their parent or carer. Some cases are a reaction to what are perceived as strict boundaries and others involve risky behaviour;
- **Peers** (71 interviews) included going missing with friends, staying out with friends and being bullied by peers;
- **Family** (37 interviews) included conflict with a parent and getting away from family issues they were struggling to deal with;
- **School** (18 interviews) included disagreements with teachers, dislike of particular classes or activities and bullying at school.

³⁶ See Annex Two (Table 16) for information on the total numbers of incidents and risk grading. There is no clear evidence for reasons for the proportional differences in grading across areas but this may merit further investigation.

Table 4 provides an overview of the main reasons given to the RHW interviewers as to why a young person ran away. In 18 interviews, the young people did not engage with the interviewer; in the records for an additional 8 interviews there was no record of any reason identified by the interviewer as to why the young person had run away³⁷.

Table 4: Reasons identified during the course of the RHWI

Main reason established	Aberdeen	Elgin	Total interviews
Linked to family	36	1	37
Linked to boundaries	69	11	80
Linked to peers	64	7	71
Linked to school	15	3	18
Other	27	2	29
Total interviews	211	24	235

Data was not recorded for 26 interviews: 24 Aberdeen and 2 Elgin.

The categories that we have used here are broad, and are likely to be overlapping in many cases:

- Reasons linked to **family** include conflict with a parent, where the young person is described as ‘falling out’, ‘not getting on’ or ‘being told off’ in relation to a close family member. It also includes cases where young people reported wanting to get away from family issues they were struggling to deal with. For example, one young person was dealing with parental bereavement and another was dealing with responsibilities of being a young carer.
- Reasons linked to **boundaries** include situations where a young person has decided to stay out beyond a curfew or where they have decided to take part in an activity (e.g. attending a party, drinking, camping out) that they know would not be approved of by their parent or carer and have decided not to return as a result. In some cases, it seems that this is in reaction to what the young person perceives to be strict boundaries and in other cases, it seems that young people have been involved in risky behaviours that are outwith the boundaries expected by most parents/carers.
- Reasons linked to **peers** include cases where young people have gone missing with friends or got involved in activity with friends that meant that they did not return home when expected or chose to stay out much later than they were allowed. It also includes incidences where young people were upset about being excluded by friends or being bullied.
- Reasons linked to **school** include disagreements with teachers, dislike of particular classes or activities, and bullying at school³⁸.

³⁷ In some cases this may be because young people did not consider themselves as having run away, nor did they consider themselves to have been ‘missing’.

³⁸ We have made a distinction between peer bullying and bullying within school where the recording notes it as related to school. However, this may be an artificial distinction to draw as peer

- **Other** includes reasons such as needing space to think, feeling unhappy about being in care, or disagreements with staff or carers within residential or foster placements.

The RHWI provided an opportunity to assess potential and actual risks experienced by young people during the time that they spent away from the place they lived (i.e. while ‘missing’).

Risks identified when young people are away

- In 29% of interviews, there were no risks identified
- 29% identified multiple risks
- 20% identified a risky social environment
- 14% identified evidence of substance use
- Evidence of physical or sexual risk was identified but in a very small number of interviews (6% identified physical risk and 1% identified sexual risk)

These risks are outlined in Table 5.

Table 5: Risks identified during the course of the RHWI

Main risk established	Aberdeen	Elgin	Total interviews
None identified	53	14	67
Risky social environments	42	4	46
Evidence of physical risk	10	3	13
Evidence of sexual risk	3	0	3
Evidence of substance use	31	2	33
Evidence of multiple risks	65	1	66
Total interviews	204	24	228

Data was not recorded for 33 interviews: 31 Aberdeen and 2 Elgin.

Previous police involvement

The data includes information on young people’s previous (prior to the RHWI) involvement with the police – this includes being the victim of, or witness to, a crime prior to the pilot period (see Table 6); as well as records of suspected and

bullying may in fact take place within school as well as external to school, and school bullying may extend to areas beyond school.

proven involvement in criminal activities or antisocial behaviour (see Table 7). (See Annex Three for a further discussion of coding issues).

Young people had experienced high levels of victimisation. The historical data available on young people's lives contains records of experiences of considerable violence. Young people were witness to violence by and towards their parents, or parents' partners. Young people were also subjected to physical aggression and assault by their parents or parents' partners, by siblings and by peers. Within the records there is evidence of children and young people being victims of sexual abuse and assault. There is also reference to children and young people being neglected in the past and currently by their parents or carers. Offences that young people have been a victim of include: sexual offences (including 'lewd and libidinous behaviour', sexual assault, and rape) and physical assault.

Table 6: Recorded victim of a crime prior to initial referral to pilot teams

Missing reports on file	Aberdeen	Elgin	Total young people
No record of suspected or proven victim of a crime	104	14	122
Record of suspected or proven victim of a crime	28	6	34
Total young people	132	20	156

Data regarding past histories of involvement in crime was coded from case records on the young people referred to the pilot areas.

The young people had also been witness to a range of offences including: domestic abuse between their parents, parental possession of drugs, and being witness to physical and sexual violence.

Table 7: Recorded offending behaviour prior to initial referral to pilot teams

Missing reports on file	Aberdeen	Elgin	Total young people
No record of suspected or proven perpetration of a crime	43	8	51
Record of suspected or proven perpetration of a crime	92	15	107
Total young people	135	23	158

Data regarding past histories of involvement in crime was coded from case records on the young people referred to the pilot areas.

The offences recorded against young people include: breach of the peace, vandalism, theft, physical assault, racially aggravated harassment, possession of drugs, driving without a license or insurance, 'wilful fire raising', 'culpable and reckless conduct', 'lewd and libidinous behaviour' towards other minors, and 'malicious mischief'.

Information obtained from RHWI

- Across both Elgin and Aberdeen, one of the key benefits of the RHWI is that it provides an opportunity to obtain information about the young person that may not otherwise be available
- The RHWI appeared to be less valued in cases where the young person was already involved with services (e.g. had an allocated social worker or had been reported missing from a residential unit)
- In a quarter of interviews overall, 'no issues' were identified. This may be because there were no issues of concern identified during the RHWI or because it was not possible to engage the young person during the course of the interview

A key objective of the pilot RHWIs was to collect information from the young person that could help identify any need for further support. Predominantly, two issues arose in relation to this. The first relates to the identification of needs of young people already in contact with services (notably those with statutory social work supervision including young people in residential units), the second relates to young people who were not in contact with services. Across both Elgin and Aberdeen, one of the key benefits of the RHWI is that it provides an opportunity to obtain information about the young person that may not otherwise be available. The RHWI appeared to be less valued in cases where the young person was already involved with services (i.e. had an allocated social worker or had been reported missing from a residential unit) as generally, this would suggest that the young person already had some form of ongoing support.

Three quarters of the interviews undertaken in Aberdeen, and half of the interviews undertaken in Elgin resulted in information being recorded on issues related to the missing episode and that were current in a young person's life³⁹. The issues identified included references to:

- drug and alcohol misuse;
- anger management, anti-social and risk taking behaviours;
- problems in relationships, including with parents, siblings, and peers;
- family problems and circumstances;
- mental health issues;
- 'care' placements and experiences.

In some cases, it was noted that the young person was known to, and/or working with, other agencies, such as social work services. In a quarter of interviews overall, RHW interviewers had recorded that 'no issues' were identified. This

³⁹ Often the notes made in the case record reflected an issue, rather than making explicit a need arising or associated with that issue. This may reflect recording processes for the purpose of the evaluation rather than RHWI practice.

may be because there were no issues of concern identified or because it was not possible to engage the young person during the course of the interview.

Procedurally, the role of the FPU in forwarding all OPS 12/1s to social work services, should ensure that where any concerns were identified (at any stage in the process), the young person would come to the attention of statutory social work services. The different systems in place in Aberdeen and Elgin meant that social work, and potentially also SCRA, would be notified that a young person was in need of some form of intervention. In Elgin, the Local Integrated Planning Group (Planning Group) could also mean that a young person was brought to the attention of independent service providers who could offer a relevant service. CBOs in Elgin, did not generally make direct referrals to services, but could flag up any needs they identified during the RHWI on the OPS 12/1 for discussion at the Planning Group. In Aberdeen, other agencies (independent sector organisations) were not involved in this process directly⁴⁰ and accordingly, the Aberdeen RHWI team would make direct referrals to other agencies, as necessary. Where a young person was involved with social work services, the RHWI Co-ordinator would contact the existing social worker to update them on the current situation; supplementing, if appropriate, information which would also be passed on through the OPS 12/1 process. Any other relevant agency may also be informed (e.g. schools) as the RHWI Co-ordinator thought appropriate.

Referral to other agencies

As the flowcharts in Annex One illustrate, the information obtained in the RHWI was important in determining further action (if any) required. All OPS 12/1s were forwarded to the FPU and from there, to social work services or SCRA as appropriate. The additional and more detailed information, which could be provided by the young person during the RHWI, meant that decisions about referral were based on enhanced information. Additionally, as well as identifying the need for new referrals, RHWI interviewers also contacted agencies already working with the young person to update them of circumstances and to inform them that the young person had been reported missing⁴¹.

⁴⁰ Although there are plans to introduce a similar system in Aberdeen city at some (unspecified) point in the future.

⁴¹ Contact with existing agencies was recorded as a referral by RHWIs as new information (relating to the missing incident) was being passed on.

- Overall, just under 50% of the interviews undertaken resulted in a referral to one agency, around 40% resulted in a referral to two agencies and 10% resulted in referrals to three agencies
- 70% (182 of 261 interviews) resulted in contact from the RHW interviewers with the young person’s existing social worker
- 40% (105 of 261 interviews) resulted in referrals to Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration
- 25% (66 of 261 interviews) resulted in new, or renewed, referrals to social work
- 18% (47 of 261 interviews) resulted in a referral to specific agencies or projects
- Gaps or lack of resources in other services could impact on the efficacy of RHWIs in referring young people on. In particular, lack of services for older teenagers was identified

Referrals made to other agencies during the pilot were recorded for each interview⁴². This was categorised by the RWHI team into four possible referral routes: (1) Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration (SCRA); (2) The child or young person’s social worker, where they had one (3) A new contact with social work services and (4) Other specific agencies or projects. Overall, just less than 50% of the interviews undertaken resulted in a referral to one agency, around 40% resulted in a referral to two agencies and 10% resulted in referrals to three agencies⁴³. Table 8 provides an overview of the numbers of referrals made per interview in each pilot area.

Table 8: Numbers of referrals made per interview as a result of RHWIs

Number of referrals	Aberdeen	Elgin	Total interviews
0	7	3	10
1	113	15	128
2	91	6	97
3	24	2	26
<i>Total interviews</i>	<i>235</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>261</i>

There were very few cases that did not result in a referral to at least one agency. Overall, no referral is recorded for only 4% of the interviews undertaken– this constituted seven interviews undertaken in Aberdeen and three interviews undertaken in Elgin. From the data recorded in relation to each interview, it appears that referrals may follow from concerns relating to the reasons young people had gone missing and/or the risks that they had encountered while

⁴² Referrals to SCRA and new referrals to social work services were made directly by the FPU in Aberdeen and Local Integrated Planning Team in Elgin, based on information provided by the RHWI.

⁴³ This includes liaison with existing social workers.

missing. Additionally, it may also be that the RHWI teams made referrals on the basis of other information that they acquired regarding the young person's circumstances.

The RHWIs resulted in contact with social work services. In some cases, this appears to have involved contact, liaison or formal referrals to children and young people's existing social workers – 182 of 261 interviews resulted in contact with a social worker known to the young person. In other cases, this appears to have resulted in new, or renewed, referrals to social work, accounting for 66 of 261 interviews. The RHWIs also resulted in referrals to SCRA - 105 of 261 interviews resulted in referrals to SCRA.

A total of 47 of 261 interviews resulted in a referral to specific agencies or projects. These included schools, health services, youth projects, the Young Runaways Service, and independent sector organisations providing a range of support services (see Annex Seven for some of the agencies contacted).

Respondents indicated that gaps or lack of resources in other services could also impact on the efficacy of RHWIs in referring young people on. In particular, the lack of services for parents – who often appeared to need someone to talk to⁴⁴ and a general absence of services for older teenagers was identified by RHWIs. It was also noted that current procedures of submitting an OPS 12/1 automatically for a young person reported missing could have unanticipated consequences. There was perceived to be a danger that young people (particularly in residential units) who were reported missing regularly may be up-tariffed through the system. For example, while they may be reported missing for failing to return home at an agreed time (9.30 curfew for example, which could be perceived as an unfair restriction by the young person), the submission of regular OPS 12/1s would mean the young person could potentially come quickly to the attention of SCRA through regular referrals via the FPU. Both RHWI teams gave examples of repeat missing person reports relating to a young person in these circumstances – and both teams were able to identify cases where they had resolved a situation of this nature by encouraging better communication between the young person and their parent/carer.

⁴⁴ This is one of the benefits of the Running – Other Choices (Aberlour Childcare Trust) service for young runaways based in Glasgow.

Timing of the RHWI

- There was agreement that the RHWIs should be conducted up to a few days after the young person had returned: it gives young people time to calm down but the episode is still fresh in their mind
- Overall, over 75% of RHWIs took place within seven days
- The Aberdeen team were generally able to respond more quickly – this is likely to be linked to the resources made available by a dedicated team without additional duties, and the shift-patterns in operation in Elgin

In terms of practicalities, there was agreement amongst different groups of respondents that the RHWIs should be conducted up to a few days after the young person had returned. This is because it gives young people time to calm down but the episode is still fresh in their mind.

As some RHWIs cover a number of missing incidents, where young people have gone missing repeatedly in a short period of time, we have calculated the time between the point at which the young person was identified after the first incident, and the RHWI. Overall, over three quarters (78%) of RHWIs took place within seven days of the young person being identified following a missing person report⁴⁵. Just over 12% took place between seven and 14 days after the young person was first identified, and 8% took place 14 days or later. Table 9 shows that the Aberdeen team were generally able to respond more quickly following a report than Elgin – this is likely to be linked to the resources made available by a dedicated team without additional duties, and the shift-patterns in operation in Elgin. There was an expectation that the RHWI should be conducted when the young person was available and with least disruption to their routine.

On occasion, it appeared to be difficult to complete the interviews within the suggested five days, as Table 9 illustrates, but this tended to be due to problems accessing young people (e.g. they may run away again before the interview takes place), and the general logistics of contacting and setting up an interview within the time-frame. However, attempts were made to conduct the interview as soon as possible after the young person had returned.

⁴⁵ Details from the case files received by the research team show that in two instances the RHWI interview was delayed due to immediate action being taken to ensure the safety of the young people involved. The files also show that in 12 cases the RHWI had to be rescheduled to a later date and in nine cases the RHWI covered multiple incidences across a short period of time.

Table 9: Time between being identified and RHWI

Time between first incident covered & interview date	Aberdeen	Elgin	Total interviews
The same day	29	1	30
From 1 up to 5 days	124	3	127
From 5 up to 7 days	38	4	42
From 7 up to 14 days	26	9	35
14 days or later	12	9	21
Total interviews	229	26	255

Data missing for 6 interviews: all Aberdeen cases.

‘Green’ category young people

For a four week period during the pilot (July - August 2009), young people reported missing from residential units and assessed as ‘Green’ (defined in Standard Operating Procedures as unauthorised absence – relatively low risk indicators) were offered RHWIs. The number of young people identified in this category was relatively small (less than 10) and difficult to distinguish from the case-files. While we identified three cases where young people were given RHWIs after staying out longer than agreed or overstaying a family contact visit, for a small number of other young people (6), incidents where they had been categorised as ‘green’ were interspersed with a number of other incidents over a short period of time. The RHWI therefore addressed several missing incidents, covering different risk grading, at one time.

The practice of providing RHWIs for young people categorised as ‘green’ did not evidence any significant benefits for a number of reasons:

- This categorisation was given where residential workers were aware of the whereabouts of the young person (i.e. late returning from a visit; overstayed time out with friends). In these circumstances, young people generally did not feel they had anything to discuss with the RHW interviewer.
- These young people were already engaged with services and were interviewed by residential unit staff on their return. The RHWI in such cases often appeared to duplicate work already carried out.
- Young people who were reported missing repeatedly would quickly be categorised at a higher risk indicator (amber or red) and subsequently came to the attention of the RHWI team. If they had already disengaged (at point of green categorisation) this could mean that they were less likely to engage with the RHWI at a point where the RHWI may have been more strategic.
- If young people in residential units were interviewed for unauthorised absence on a regular basis (for example for late return to the unit) the process of the RHWI and completion of the OPS 12/1, could result in a

referral to the Reporter more quickly than some respondents felt was appropriate.

As one respondent noted: *“The ‘greens’ are probably less appropriate because they have already got supports in place. Generally the reason they were on a green was because the staff at the unit would know where they had gone, or who they were with and would have some means of contact with them”.*

The Young Runaways Service (provided by Grampian Police and Barnardo’s) is already well established in residential units in Grampian and provides an opportunity to monitor reports and responses to young people categorised as ‘green’. RHWIs, in this context, were viewed as a potential duplication of interventions.

Location of the RHWI

- Various locations were used (the family home, residential care home, school and, in Elgin, an Action for Children premises, and a joint Social Work/Police facility). Police Stations were not used
- No strong preferences for particular locations emerged. In many cases location was considered relatively unimportant by the young person and in others, the circumstances of the young person were taken into account to ensure they were comfortable and felt able to talk

RHWIs were conducted at family homes, foster care placements, residential placements, schools and other relatives’ homes. The place at which the RHWI was conducted did not appear to be influenced by where young people lived at the point they went missing – both young people who lived at home and those who lived in ‘care’ were interviewed in their place of residence, schools and other places. Table 10 provides an overview of the numbers of interviews held in different locations within each area.

Table 10: Numbers of RHWIs by location

Location	Aberdeen	Elgin	Total
Home	100	6	106
Foster care	6	0	6
Residential care	84	4	88
School	30	0	30
Relative’s house	5	0	5
Other ⁴⁶	3	15	18
Total interviews	228	25	253

Data missing for 8 interviews: 7 Aberdeen and 1 Elgin.

⁴⁶ Interviews in Elgin generally take place at an Action for Children premises in the town or at a joint SWD/Police facility used for Joint Investigative Interviewing.

RHWI respondents noted that if the young person was experiencing problems at home, the RHWI may be usefully held elsewhere (i.e. at school) to ensure the young person was able to talk openly. However, if workers suspected that all was not well at the home of the young person, it was suggested that they may consider it beneficial to visit the young person there to obtain a perspective on their home circumstances. Other locations for interview included the school, and voluntary organisation premises in Elgin. Interviews were not held at the police station in either pilot area, or in Fraserburgh. In Aberdeen, the RHWI team reported difficulty in finding a neutral place. In Elgin, Winchester House was made available by a local voluntary organisation. However two of the RHW interviewers expressed concern about their safety (potential allegations against them; or threats from young people) when using this resource when there were no other people around. RHWIs are conducted on a one-to-one basis unless circumstances require otherwise; however, if considered appropriate, more than one RHW interviewer could take part. This issue highlights the importance of training, supervision and support for RHW interviewers.

Effectiveness of information

- **Where a young person was already involved with social work services, some social work respondents were dubious that the RHWI could provide additional information or support.**
- **However, it would appear that the young person may not be in continual contact with their social worker or be engaging with services and the RHWI could be useful in these circumstances.**
- **For young people without statutory support, the RHWI was often the first opportunity they had to discuss problems they were experiencing and allowed onward referral to social work and/or another relevant service.**
- **The key difference from Fraserburgh (where referrals could also be picked up via the OPS 12/1) was in the quality and depth of information collected.**
- **Both RHWI teams give cards to young people with the contact details of the officer who conducted the interview. Young people are encouraged to make contact if they feel the need and this had been used and appreciated by young people.**

Non-statutory agency respondents indicated that RHWI referrals were often 'new' referrals; indicating that young people were accessing a service they may not have had without the RHWI; where social work referrals were also made to non-statutory agencies (for the same young person), respondents commented that RHWI referrals were made at an earlier stage (more timely and with more detailed information than social workers were often able to provide) which enabled interventions before they hit crisis point.

A key objective of the RHWI is to provide an opportunity to identify the circumstances which surround the incident and identify any reasons the young person may have for running away. It was acknowledged that the information

made available to social work as a result of the interview might help inform any decision to refer to other services and that the RHWI could usefully flag up the need for services. Even though there were some inter-agency tensions (over roles and responsibilities) these appeared to be reducing or were being addressed by the end of the pilot.

Social work respondents in both Elgin and Aberdeen commented that where a young person was already involved with social work services, it was the social worker's role to make referrals to any other agencies as appropriate. Social work respondents were generally dubious that the RHWI could provide information or support that young people could not already access through social work services. However, it would appear that the young person may not be in continual contact with their social worker (the fact that minimum contact for a young person under social work supervision is once every three months, was highlighted to the team) or be engaging with services. It was also suggested that social workers do not always have time to follow up identified needs of young people. Even where these tensions existed, social work and residential worker respondents were of the view that previous practice (noting of cancellation details) was problematic and that the introduction of the RHWI could provide a space for young people 'in transition' to speak to someone outwith the people/agencies already involved in their lives. Generally, respondents did consider this to be a useful way to work in a multi-agency context with the police, thereby following the spirit of Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC).

For young people without statutory support, the RHWI was often the first opportunity they had to discuss problems they were experiencing; having someone who was prepared to listen to them was perceived as extremely important for a number of young people. It also meant that information could be disclosed that could be addressed by onward referral to a relevant service. Where a need for social work involvement was identified through the OPS 12/1, this would be addressed and the young person would receive the appropriate social work intervention. While this practice also existed in Fraserburgh, the key difference was in the quality and depth of information collected, with RHWIs often affording more information on both the young persons' circumstances and activities while missing. However, it was evident across all areas that while some young people may have been experiencing difficulties in their lives, they did not automatically meet the required threshold for social work intervention. Given pressure on resources, and also recognition that statutory involvement may not always be the required response⁴⁷, this could mean that young people may not receive any form of intervention at the point of referrals resulting from the OPS 12/1. This difficulty was lessened in Elgin where all relevant agencies were jointly involved in identifying the needs and appropriate response for individual young people at this stage, and in Aberdeen by direct referrals made by the RHWI at any stage in the process.

⁴⁷ Based on reluctance to 'up-tariff' young people through statutory services where this could have longer-term negative consequences for the young person.

In Aberdeen, young people were referred to services such as counselling or family support by the RHW interviewers (See Annex Seven for details). Difficulties, such as bereavement or problems at school, could be addressed by voluntary referral to an independent organisation, where statutory involvement was considered to be either inappropriate, or could not be accessed. Referrals to other agencies could be made as a formal referral or informal contact, and on occasion, young people would be accompanied to the service by an Aberdeen RHW interviewer. Several agency respondents had first come into contact with the RHWI team at a training event or information sharing session. Overall, there appeared to be good working relationships between the RHWI team and independent (non-statutory) agencies, particularly in terms of keeping other agencies informed of developments and sharing information. Respondents based in local schools appeared to value communications with the RHWI team, noting that generally other agencies did not pass on information about a young person which schools would benefit from knowing. It was suggested by police respondents that the RHWI Co-ordinator may be in a position to develop her role to expand the current involvement with other agencies.

In addition to making referrals to social work or other agencies as appropriate, both RHWI teams give cards to young people with the contact details of the officer who conducted the interview. Young people are encouraged to make contact if they feel the need and RHW interviewers (one in Elgin and one in Aberdeen) gave examples of situations where they had been contacted by a young person: in one case because of difficulties the young person was experiencing; in one case the young person had contacted the interviewer to let them know that his circumstances had improved and he was now doing well. A number of young people who participated in the evaluation indicated they had kept the card in a safe place and would make contact if required.

Aberdeen:

- In general the information sharing process worked well
- The OPS 12/1 form allowed RHW interviewers to both raise concerns and provide an opinion about the young person's level of risk which was passed on to the Family Protection Unit
- The dominant view of the social workers interviewed was that the information provided by the RHWIs was very detailed and useful, provided a different perspective and often information about young people's families and friends which was not otherwise known
- Police involvement as the lead agency facilitated access to information which was available only to the police and not to other agencies, but could be shared as appropriate
- As the police were the agency which looked for the young person when they were missing, they could pass on information directly to the RHWI team about the circumstances of the young person while they were

missing or immediately after they were traced

Elgin:

- Social workers commented that it was useful to know that a CBO was going out to see the young person so that the officer was aware of the situation within the family and could conduct the interview within this context
- Social workers reported that information sharing between agencies was generally good, with a multi-agency Integrated Assessment Planning Meeting system in place to refer young people to services
- Relationships between the police and other agencies were generally close and co-operative, with often daily information sharing occurring

Fraserburgh:

- The current system in Aberdeenshire means that limited information is obtained and therefore there is little to share with other agencies; in addition there are very few agencies in the local area to which young people can be referred
- It was the view of residential staff at two units that having a RHWI system would be beneficial, providing a specific police contact to liaise with about running away situations and to come out and talk to young people about the risks associated with running away, offering an extra support in itself

Aberdeen

At the initial stage of the pilot the RHWI team reported that good relationships were established in general between themselves and children and families social

workers in Aberdeen which resulted in joint referrals being made and information shared as appropriate. The RHWI team were keen to be able to make direct referrals to relevant agencies rather than waiting to go through social work services which could sometimes lead to a delay before issues were picked up. The RHWI team discussed what might be an appropriate agency to refer a young person to at their team meeting, also attended by workers from the Young Runaways Service. They were able to identify an appropriate agency on the OPS 12/1 form which the FPU would then pass on to social work staff. There was a system for sharing information 'back and forth' between residential units and the RHW interviewers.

Interviews undertaken at the end of the evaluation indicated that in general the information sharing process worked well. The OPS 12/1 form allowed the RHW interviewers to both raise concerns and provide an opinion about the young person's level of risk. In relation to the information provided to the statutory services, including the FPU:

- The dominant view of the Aberdeen social workers interviewed was that the information provided by the RHWIs was very detailed and useful; the information provided a different perspective and often contained background information or information about young people's families and friends which was not otherwise known.
- One social worker cited an example of the RHWI co-ordinator having provided very useful information about one girl who was not engaging with social work and commented that it was good to know that at least the RHW interviewers had met with her.
- The dominant view of the Aberdeen social workers was that the RHW interviewers were accessible and willing to offer more information about individuals when contacted by them.
- On the other hand, there was a view that communication could be improved between RHW interviewers and social workers as to the purpose of the interviews, the interviewers' intentions to attend young people's Core Group meetings, and information about what had come out of the RHWI.
- One Aberdeen social worker stated that the RHW interviewers were able to liaise with schools and discuss help for young people, both known and not known to social work, possibly acting more quickly to progress this than social workers who were constrained by full caseloads.

The RHW interviewers indicated that there were challenges in working with some social workers who they thought either did not appreciate the role of the RHW interviewer or were concerned that they were encroaching on the social work role. However, these tensions had significantly reduced towards the end of the pilot. The RHWI Co-ordinator received feedback about where the OPS 12/1 was sent on to by the FPU but social workers themselves reported that they were

not always able to provide more detailed feedback about what occurred as a result of the referral from the RHWI teams.

Both RHW interviewers and social workers acknowledged that the police, as lead agency, facilitated access to information which was available only to the police and not to other agencies. In addition, as the police were the agency which looked for the young person when they were missing they could pass on information directly to the RHWI team about the circumstances of the young person while they were missing or immediately after they were traced.

The view of one residential unit manager who was interviewed at the beginning of the pilot was that the RHWI was unlikely to provide more information from young people or lead to extra supports for them. This view was much the same at the later interviews with two residential unit staff. The extent to which issues about individual young people were being fed back to residential staff, or indeed required to be fed back, varied. Generally, there was effective information sharing, as appropriate, with both the RHWI staff and with the Young Runaways Service Link Officer. It would appear that residential units were already engaged with the YRS and perhaps less likely to be clear about the distinct role of the RHWI. From the data, it is evident that in both Aberdeen and Elgin, there was a lower number of missing incidences reported regarding young people from residential or foster care placements in the final months of the pilot compared with the initial months. This was also the case for the control area.

Elgin

Social workers expressed the view that communication between themselves and the RHWI CBOs and Co-ordinator had been good before the RHWI took place. It was useful to know that a CBO was going out to see the young person so that the RHW interviewer was aware of the situation within the family and could conduct the interview within this context. Feedback to social workers after the interview did not usually occur, however, in one case there had been useful and detailed verbal feedback offered.

Social workers reported that information sharing between agencies in Elgin was generally good, with a multi-agency Integrated Assessment Planning Meeting system in place, the role of which was to refer young people to services. It was felt that this process worked well. In general the Elgin social workers considered that the information provided by RHW interviewers about young people who were already known to social work tended to duplicate what the social work service already knew. Relationships with the police were generally close and co-operative however, with often daily information sharing occurring.

Residential staff expressed the view that the process worked well enough up to the point where the interviews took place but that it was unclear how this led on to increased supports for young people as making referrals to services was part of the role of residential staff themselves.

Fraserburgh

Social workers interviewed did not consider that young people running away was a major issue in their area. Young people were usually found in the locations around the town which were known as congregation points for young people. Running away or going missing was generally viewed by social workers as one of a number of wider issues which a young person was presenting with and would be approached in that context.

It was the view of residential staff interviewed at two units that having a RHWI system could be valuable. It might offer an extra support strand in itself in that there would then be a specific police officer with whom they could liaise in relation to running away situations, and who could talk to young people about the risks associated with running away. It was considered important for this person to be outside social work and one who was linked to the police was likely to have some authority. Young people in residential care have access to a Who Cares? worker but this person covers a large geographical area and, it was suggested, does not have sufficient time to take on additional work. The current system means that limited information is obtained about incidences of running away; in addition there are very few agencies in the local area to which young people can be referred.

Sharing Information

- **The information obtained at the RHWI was seen by those conducting the interview as having two main purposes: identifying welfare issues (which would involve sharing of information on young person's background and the issues identified in the RHWI with the referral agency); and intelligence gathering.**
- **Professional respondents indicated that the information from RHWIs could provide them with a different perspective on the young person's circumstances and often contained background information about young person's home situation, their families and friends which was not otherwise known.**
- **Information about where young people run to and who they spend their time with was understood to be useful in the potential protection of other young people.**
- **The Getting it Right for Every Child framework includes the practice of multi-agency information sharing. There is an underpinning principle of child protection which would over-ride issues of consent. However, it was noted that there were potentially 'grey' areas concerning confidentiality.**

In common with the rest of Scotland, services for young people across Grampian operate within national policies which include the Getting it Right for Every Child framework. This framework includes the practice of multi-agency information sharing and integrated planning for young people across services. There is an underpinning principle of child protection which would over-ride issues of

consent. This would apply to situations where young people are considered to be 'at risk' and would include episodes when young people are running away or are missing.

Professional respondents indicated that the information received following on from a RHWI could provide them with a different perspective on the young person's circumstances and often contained background information about young people's home situation, their families and friends which was not otherwise known. There was often also useful information about young people's (and their parents') attitudes to the missing incident. Additional information, about who young people were associating or running away with, was also viewed as helpful; providing a context to the young person's behaviour.

Information about where young people run to and who they spend their time with was understood to be useful in the potential protection of other young people (for example at least one case of harbouring has developed from information obtained during the pilot)⁴⁸. The importance of this type of information sharing was reiterated by staff from other agencies. Information such as the occurrence of domestic abuse in the home, which might not be addressed by social work referrals, was also valued. The RHWI could also highlight situations where counselling or extra family supports might be required. However, it was noted that while there were potentially 'grey' areas concerning confidentiality the child protection principle was considered paramount'.

Guidance teachers at secondary schools attended by young people who were interviewed were contacted if it was considered that it was appropriate for issues to be passed on. The RHWI team were seen positively in terms of keeping other agencies informed of developments, for example in liaising with schools to update them about young people's circumstances.

While there had been some inter-agency tensions at the outset of the pilot, communication had improved significantly between RHWI teams and other agencies by the end of the evaluation.

Effectiveness of pre-pilot training

- A comprehensive training programme, supported by a training pack was introduced at the outset of the pilot
- Due to resource issues, the Aberdeen team received training across four days while the Elgin team received a shortened version
- The training was useful and considered key in implementing this welfare-based approach to working with young people
- The input from a young person who had run away was particularly valued
- It may have been useful to have training from the outset on child protection

⁴⁸ Information obtained during the RHWI is input to the Scottish Intelligence Database (SID), (with source anonymised). This national database can be used to connect intelligence and build up an overview of specific issues.

procedures and information sharing, but this was made available on an ongoing basis

Considerable time and thought went into training preparation for the pilot. The Aberdeen team received training across four days with input from Melanie Stone, Barnardo's and Martin Henry of the Coalition for Young Runaways. A young woman who had experience of running away also attended and took part in role plays and discussions. The format consisted of information sharing, discussion and role plays (video-recorded). The training was designed to support the civilian employees to become familiar with police procedures, and to support police respondents to work with a welfare-focused approach. A comprehensive pack was provided to support the training (contents listed in Annex Four). The Elgin team received a shortened version of this training (without input from Martin Henry) which was delivered twice, once to three team members and an even shorter version delivered to an individual CBO who had not been able to attend on the previous two occasions. Both teams indicated that they found the training useful; however respondents could only comment on the training format that they had experienced.

Overall, the training was seen to be useful and the benefits of having ongoing training (for example in GIRFEC procedures and child protection) have been clear to the team. The initial input from a young person who had run away was particularly valued by the teams, while the Elgin team indicated that it had been challenging to conceptualise their work with young people from a welfare rather than investigative perspective. This was less of an issue for one CBO who had extensive experience of joint child protection interviews. Two areas where it may have been useful to have training from the outset include child protection procedures and information sharing – but this has been obtained as time has gone on.

Young People's experiences of the RHWI

- On the whole, young people interviewed for the evaluation were positive about the experience of the RHWI
- They felt that they were listened to by the interviewer, were able to confide in them and found it useful to be able to talk to someone about their problems
- Most were satisfied with the location and timing of their interviews
- The majority of interviews took place without a parent or friend present and young people were happy with this
- Views were mixed as to whether the interview has made them less likely to run away again
- Most young people were not aware of any referral having been made and were of the opinion that this was appropriate, either because they already had social work involvement or because they thought that things had improved since the incident
- Residential staff and social workers had not had a great deal of feedback from young people, but the feedback they had received from young people on the usefulness of the RHWI was less positive than the views expressed by young people interviewed by the research team

On the whole, young people were positive about the experience of the RHWI. They felt that they were listened to by the interviewer, were able to confide in them and found it useful to be able to talk to someone about their problems.

The lead up to the RHWI

Young people appreciated being contacted beforehand to arrange the interview. However, some young people were unclear as to whether they had a choice about participating in the RHWI, or the location and timing of it. While young people in Elgin were more likely to say that they had had a choice in these matters, young people in both pilot areas stated that they were happy to have the interview and were not worried about it beforehand. The exceptions to this were a young person in Aberdeen who was worried about being taken into care and a young person in Elgin who was slightly nervous because the police were involved. Most young people were also satisfied with the location and timing of their interviews. The majority of interviews took place without a parent or friend present (as the RHWI guidance indicates) and young people stated they were happy with this. Young people were contacted directly, wherever possible, but parents/carers were the initial point of contact in some cases. However, young people did not seem to mind their parents/carers knowing that they were attending the interview.

Young people generally recalled being informed of the purpose of the interview and were comfortable with this.

Experience of the RHWI

Young people interviewed by the research team described the RHWIs as very informal and, on the whole, did not appear to have found any of the questions difficult to answer or overly intrusive. Asked whether there were any questions they particularly liked being asked, issues of safety and risk were mentioned; both that it was good to know that someone was concerned about their welfare and being given information on the risks that they could be exposed to while missing. A small number of young people indicated a question that they disliked being asked. These included questions about: family problems, sexual behaviour, and who they were with while away. Young people seemed to be aware that they did not have to discuss anything that they did not want to. However, one young person stated that he felt compelled to answer all the questions because it was a police officer (Elgin) who was conducting the interview and he thought if he did not answer everything he might 'get into trouble'.

Young people indicated that they had found the interviewers easy to talk to and most young people felt they could confide in them. They thought that the interviewers listened to what they had to say and were trying to help them. In fact, some young people said that they had enjoyed 'chatting' with the interviewers. It appears that the personality and manner of the interviewers was what made the young people able to trust them and open up to them.

Some professionals expressed concerns that it is difficult for young people to open up and speak to someone that they have not met before. However, this did not appear to be problematic for young people and, in fact, they found it helpful to be able to talk to someone who was not involved with them in any other way. One young person indicated that she was able to tell the interviewer (in Elgin) things she hadn't discussed with anyone previously and another (in Aberdeen) mentioned that she found the interviewer easier to talk to than her social worker.

Interviewers tended to give young people their phone numbers and told them that they could call them if they needed to talk again. Young people appeared to like this and a number indicated they had kept the card in a safe place and would make contact if required.

Usefulness of the RHWI

The RHWI aims to identify needs of young people who run away and ensure that they are referred to an appropriate service for further support if required. As a result of this, it is hoped that the number of incidences of young people running away will decline.

Young people indicated that they tended to feel better after the interview. They found it useful to 'get things off their chest', particularly with someone who they didn't know previously and was therefore not involved in other aspects of their life. However, views were mixed as to whether the interview had made them less likely to run away again. Some young people felt that they were less likely to run away again and the following reasons were given:

- being given advice about talking to someone and alternative ways of coping if they have problems;
- being able to call the interviewer to talk if they did think about running away again;
- fear of getting in trouble;
- having the risks of running away explained to them;
- realising how much people worry when they run away.

In addition, while one young person could not say that she would not run away again, she did conclude that she would be less likely to be unsafe while away. A small number of young people interviewed (3) did not feel that the RHWI had been useful and had already run away again since it took place.

Most young people interviewed as part of the evaluation were not aware of any referral having been made and were of the opinion that this was appropriate, either because they already had social work involvement or because they thought that things had improved since the incident. One young person mentioned that she had been referred to the Young Runaways Service which she had found useful and a small number of young people mentioned that they would like some further support. This included anger management (which had been discussed at the RHWI but had not materialised as yet) and extra support at school.

Residential staff and social workers interviewed during the evaluation were asked whether young people had fed back to them about the RHWI. Although they had not had a great deal of feedback, their views on the usefulness of the RHWI were less positive than those of the young people themselves, and some respondents did not think that young people were benefiting greatly from the interviews.⁴⁹ There was a view amongst a small number of professional respondents, that some of the young people in Elgin had negative views of the police.

Techniques for delivering RHWIs

From the perspective of young people interviewed, the revised technique for conducting interviews in Aberdeen and Elgin was more effective at enabling them to share information than the current approach in Aberdeenshire.

Young people in Aberdeenshire do not divulge as much information to their interviewer as those in Aberdeen in Elgin.

⁴⁹ It is possible that the young people who participated in the evaluation were more likely to engage with the RHWI. This would make it possible that our sample is drawn from young people who may engage with other services while other workers (residential and social workers) may have seen a broader range of views expressed by young people.

The RHWIs differed significantly from the cancellation process used in Fraserburgh and elsewhere in Aberdeenshire in a number of ways. While the cancellation process was obligatory (although a young person could withhold information by refusing to answer questions) and highly structured, the RHWI by comparison was voluntary (following on from a required safe and well check) and the interview teams attempted to make it as unstructured as possible. Notes were taken as appropriate, and given to the young person at the end of the interview to ensure accuracy and to let the young person see what had been written. From the perspective of young people interviewed, the revised technique for conducting interviews in Aberdeen and Elgin was more effective at enabling them to share information, than the current approach in Aberdeenshire.

The Aberdeen RHWI interviewers indicated that they had become more confident in conducting interviews and had started to build up relationships with young people who run away repeatedly, allowing them to obtain better information which can be used more effectively. The close working proximity to the Young Runaways Service also meant that information and advice could be shared across the two teams and, while valuing a supportive line management structure, the support within the team itself was considered important to individual workers. Training and practice guidelines are also valuable to enable workers to have confidence in this process.

As discussed above, young people who had taken part in an RHWI in Aberdeen and Elgin were positive about the experience. They felt that it had been useful to talk to someone about their situation and had found the interviewers very easy to talk to. On the other hand, the three young people in Fraserburgh interviewed by the police on returning home after being on the run were less positive about the interview, although to varying degrees. From the experiences described by young people, it would appear that young people in Aberdeenshire do not divulge as much information to their interviewer as those in Aberdeen or Elgin.

In order to consider the impact that the RHWI has, we examined routine practice in Fraserburgh and sought the views of operational officers to establish existing views of current practice in Aberdeenshire. The available evidence indicated that there was a general view of current practice in Aberdeenshire that the process is not particularly helpful. The form (OPS 5/7) completed as a way of noting cancellation details was considered to be overly formal and officers indicated that there is not enough time to complete it effectively; moreover many of the young people are reluctant to disclose information to operational police officers. Police officers who have been using the forms on a regular basis try to have a 'conversation' with the young person, which they will structure around getting the information they need. Otherwise the form asks for a significant amount of detailed and personal information using a 'tick-box' format. However, the number of young people reported missing in Fraserburgh was considered to be small and was not viewed as a major issue for the police in Aberdeenshire. Respondents believed that most of the missing reports on young people were generated from the local residential unit and the majority were known to local police officers. One of the difficulties identified by respondents was that most of the young people who were reported missing were not actually 'missing' (i.e.

their whereabouts may have been known, but they had failed to comply with rules or curfews). This meant that the administrative procedure and form-filling could be viewed as time-consuming for officers, when set against the fact that there was unlikely to be any further action.

As only three interviews were conducted with young people in Fraserburgh for the evaluation, and the experiences of each were different, they are discussed in turn below.

One young person had a fairly positive experience and expressed views similar to those in Aberdeen and Elgin in relation to being able to speak to and trust the police officer conducting the interview. She also noted a difference within Aberdeenshire in the way the interviews were conducted; she felt that the interview in Fraserburgh was better than one she had had in another part of Aberdeenshire (she was asked about how she was in general rather than just what she did while away). She described the Fraserburgh cancellation interview as similar to a mini RHWI in that it was unstructured and she was asked if there was anything wrong with where she was staying, why she had run away and how she was feeling. After having the idea of the RHWI explained to her, she thought that it sounded like a good plan.

The second young person felt that the interview (which took place a couple of days after she had returned home) had actually made matters worse for her as things had just settled down and the interview brought them all back up again. The young person did think that the policeman listened but she didn't feel she could trust any police officer and did not want to discuss things with him. She could not talk about what she did while she was away because her dad was there (she had not had a choice about this) and did not discuss who she was with as she felt that the police would go to them if she went missing again. She said that she felt happy when it was over but this was because the police would not have to come back rather than because she had found it useful.

The third young person reported having a very negative experience. She stated that she was not informed of the purpose of the cancellation interview and was made to feel like she was wasting police time. The interview was conducted with residential staff present and she had not had a choice about this. She felt that the police conducting the interview did not listen to her and, in fact, talked over her and spoke to the staff instead. She didn't feel she could trust the police because they were strangers to her she did not want to talk about certain things, such as why she ran away, because residential staff were present. Although she was asked about why she ran away, she felt that it was in an 'angry way' that made her feel that she was in trouble as opposed to the caring way described by young people in Aberdeen and Elgin: *'Aye I mind they said why did you do it, but he said it like why did you do it, like he was angry with me.'* In saying this, the young person did acknowledge that she was not likely to run away again. She attributed this partly to the interview, in that it made her more aware of the risks that she is taking by doing so; and partly to the fact that she has matured.

Two young people interviewed in Aberdeen who had run away previously remarked on the improvement from interviews they had experienced before the RHWI pilot. One commented on the fact that the timescale for conducting the interview was more appropriate: *'It was good – it was better than the police coming and talking to you at three in the morning'*, while another found that she could trust the RHW interviewer more than she could trust 'the police'.

Police role in RHWIs

- **There was an overall consensus that the police were the most appropriate agency to conduct RHWIs**
- **There were a number of reasons for this: the 'authority' (from a young person's perspective) that their position afforded; the fact that were likely to be the first agency to come into contact with a young runaway; it was felt they were able to respond more quickly (e.g. than social workers); and information would be available to the police that would not be available to other agencies which could be used to determine the potential risks to the young person**
- **However, both professionals and young people agreed that it was an interviewer's ability to relate to the young person that was the most important factor – not which agency they came from**
- **In general, young people felt that police uniform should not be worn**

There was an overall consensus amongst respondents that the police were the most appropriate agency to conduct RHWIs. The young people interviewed as part of the evaluation were positive about their experiences of the RHWI. On the whole, in both pilot areas (Aberdeen and Elgin), they were able to relate well to the interviewers and felt that it was appropriate for the police to conduct the RHWI. There was, however, a minority view that social workers are easier to speak to and so would be more suited to conducting the RHWI. In line with views held by professionals, there was a feeling that their ability to relate to the young person was the most important factor: *"It doesn't matter where they come from, as long as you can talk to them"*.

Young people in both Aberdeen and Elgin felt that police uniform should not be worn while conducting the RHWI. In Aberdeen it was mentioned by some young people that they would have been less comfortable with a 'real' (uniformed) police person as they are afraid of them. In Elgin, where interviews were conducted with CBOs wearing uniform, young people still felt able to relate well to the interviewer although some felt more comfortable once the interviewers took off their police jackets and one said she would have preferred them to dress in non-uniform casual clothes. However, an opposing view was that they should

wear uniform because it is reassuring to know that they are definitely from the police.

Amongst social work and other professional respondents, a range of views were evident on the appropriateness of the RHWIs being undertaken by Grampian Police. Generally, the police (as an organisation) were seen to be appropriate for this task because of the authority that their position afforded. Police were also considered to be the relevant agency as they were assumed to be the first agency to come into contact with a young runaway. Indeed it was thought that the police were more able to respond quickly (quicker than social workers for example) in contacting and meeting with young people. As indicated previously, the Aberdeen team were generally able to conduct the RHWI within a shorter time frame.

Police involvement, it was noted by some respondents, could highlight the seriousness of running away (to a young person). However, some respondents questioned the appropriateness of the police role in conducting welfare interviews. It was acknowledged however that the police lead in the RHWI meant that a great deal of information was available (to the RHWI team) that would not be available to other agencies and which could be used to determine the potential risks to the young person.

Professional respondents in Aberdeen viewed the RHWI team as being different from operational police – they were considered to have specific skills in working with young people and it was suggested that young people may be more likely to relate to the RHWI team than to ‘ordinary’ officers who may have a negative approach to individual young people who repeatedly run away/are reported missing. However, the distinctive role of the CBOs in Elgin, also seemed to be viewed positively, despite the fact that they were still uniformed officers. This could be a result of their presence in the community. Social workers in Elgin thought that if young people were interviewed by police officers who they knew from the community, and had established a rapport with, they might open up to them.

In Elgin, however, there was a difference of opinion within the RHWI team. While some officers considered the police to be best placed, others felt that young people were unlikely to disclose anything significant to the police and that other agencies (especially those with some existing involvement with the young person) might be in a better position to conduct the RHWIs.

There were a number of practical challenges facing the RHWI teams. Shift patterns and other operational demands impacted on the Elgin team’s ability to conduct the RHWIs within five days, or to allocate set amounts of time to preparing and following up the RHWIs – this was clearly less of a difficulty when the number of young people reported missing had decreased towards the end of the evaluation period. In Aberdeen however, time was less of an issue, while other, practical challenges were evident. For instance, the RHWI team did not have unlimited access to a vehicle. On a small number of occasions, RHWIs had been postponed as no transport was available.

While relationships between RHW interviewers and other professionals were generally good, examples of difficulties in accessing young people in (some) residential units were reported in Aberdeen, where relationships with residential staff were not entirely unproblematic. There had also been some challenges experienced in working with (some) social workers who either seemed not to appreciate the role of the RHW interviewers or who were concerned that the RHW interviewers were encroaching on ‘social work’ tasks.

Respondents also indicated that while the service (RHWI) may be relatively costly, it was likely to make savings in the longer term by preventing young people from running away repeatedly, and averting further crisis in the young person’s life.

Incidents reported during the pilot period

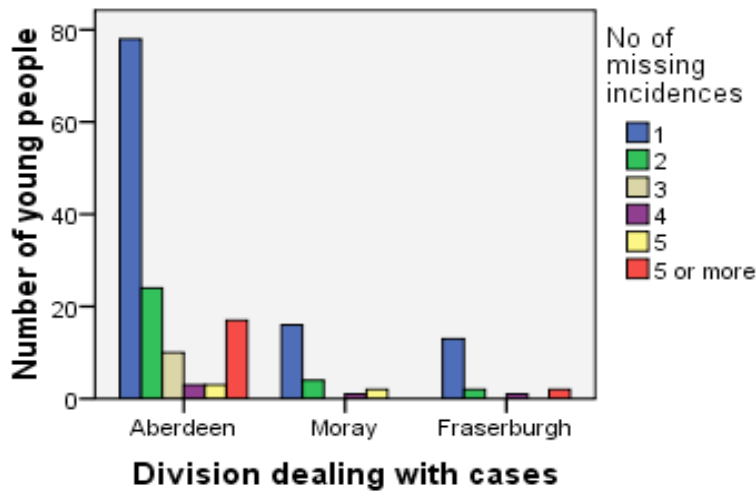
Most young people ran only once during the course of the pilot period: 107 out of 176 young people ran only once as show in Table 11. The pattern across the three areas appears to be similar, as illustrated by Figure 3, with the majority of young people running only once. However, it is also true that a number of young people were reported missing repeatedly during the course of the pilot.

Table 11: Numbers of reported incidences per young person during pilot period

Frequency of incidences	Aberdeen	Elgin	Fraserburgh	Total young people
1	78	16	13	107
2	24	4	2	30
3	10	0	0	10
4	3	1	1	5
5	3	2	0	5
More than 5	17	0	2	19
Total young people	135	23	18	176

Data are available for all 176 young people in the sample.

Figure 3 Frequency of missing reports by young people in the three areas

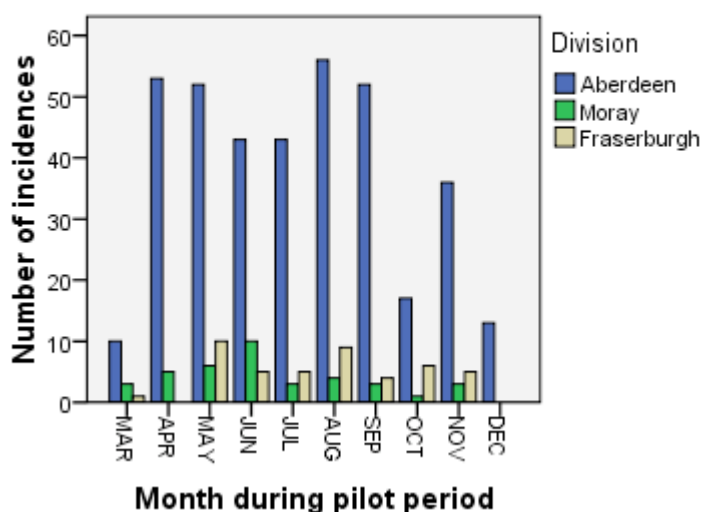


In the pilot areas, it was possible to measure the number of times that young people had been reported missing during the pilot period and during a comparable period in the previous year⁵⁰. Seventy five per cent of the young people had not been reported missing during the previous year (26th March 2008 to 26th December 2008), it appears from the police records that most of those young people had never been reported missing previously.

Among the small group of young people who had been reported missing multiple times in the comparable period prior to the pilot, some were reported missing only once during the pilot period (5 out of 18) including two young people who had been reported missing five times or more previously. However, it was also the case that five young people who were not reported missing in the previous period, and five who were reported once in the previous period, went on to be reported missing more than five times during the pilot period. Half (5 out of 10) of the young people who had been reported missing more than five times in the previous period also continued to be reported missing frequently during the course of the pilot. This perhaps raises a question for the development of RHWI and how they address the needs of young people who are repeatedly reported missing.

Figure 4 Numbers of incidents each month within the three areas

⁵⁰ See Annex Two, Table 10 and 11



As Figure 4 illustrates, numbers of incidents peaked in Aberdeen during August, in Elgin during June, and in Fraserburgh during May. In all three areas there were a lower number of incidents during December, with no incidences reported in Elgin or Fraserburgh

COST ANALYSIS

The cost of doing nothing

As with any social welfare intervention of this nature, the costs of implementation must be considered against the potential human benefits if the intervention is successful (in this case the potential benefits are the short and long term well-being of the young people and their families, as well as the avoidance of harm to those who might be victims of crimes committed by young runaways). Rees and Lee (2005) illustrate that one in six young runaways sleep rough, and one in 12 young runaways are hurt or harmed while running away. There is evidence of 'risky survival strategies' in the case of one in ten young runaways. These statistics do little to highlight the extent of harm experienced by young people who run away or the ongoing damage and distress that underpins their running away and subsequent risks. As they note, *"it can be estimated that more than a fifth of young people who run away overnight might be regarded as at tangible risk whilst they are away from home"* (Rees and Lee, 2005: 22).

Similarly, the Prison Reform Trust (PRT) (2005: 16) notes the high number of prisoners who ran away from home as a child. Forty seven percent of male and 50% of female sentenced prisoners ran away from home as a child, compared to around 11% of the general population.⁵¹ More specifically, research on the experiences of young runaways has identified that offending behaviour is

⁵¹ The PRT also note that 27% of the prison population were taken into care as a child, compared to 2% of the general population.

generally a survival strategy (shoplifting, theft, prostitution) or a coping mechanism (use of drugs, alcohol) (Safe on the Streets Research Team, 1999; Wade, 2001; Rees and Lee, 2005). This can often result in long-term difficulties including addiction and adult homelessness.

There are potential costs to be considered of not implementing the pilot. Although it was not expected that the number of incidents would reduce as a direct result of the scheme (at least not in the short term and not significantly), there is the potential that the number of repeat incidents might be reduced to some degree by a successful intervention. Each runaway incident has a police cost and any reduction on the number of incidents will result in a saving. In 2004, Lancashire Constabulary (Lancashire Constabulary, 2005) estimated the average cost of dealing with a missing person enquiry was £1,000 (allowing for inflation that would equate to £1145 in 2009). Research undertaken by Barnardo's in 1999 found that missing person reports in Grampian required five hours of police time and a report for the Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Unit (2001) also indicated that a missing person enquiry requires five hours of police time.

In addition to the significant savings if the number of young runaway incidents is reduced, there are potential savings if runaway incidents and other investigations are resolved more quickly because of intelligence obtained in RHWIs. As noted above, at least one case of harbouring has developed from information obtained during the pilot.

The cost of doing nothing must therefore be borne in mind when considering the costs of RHWIs discussed below.

RHWI staff costs

It is very difficult to make a fair comparison between the costs of the Elgin model and the Aberdeen model. The main costs relate to staff salaries and the Aberdeen model is based on two full time interviewers and a Co-ordinator working largely for the Aberdeen team but also contributing to the Elgin work. The Elgin model is based on several (four) CBOs undertaking RHWI as and when necessary, as part of their wider remit.

While it is relatively easy to work out the police officer cost per RHWI for Elgin (based on the average time spent on each case) it is less easy to work out the cost of the Co-ordinator's time per Elgin RHWI.

While it is also relatively easy to calculate a staff cost per RHWI for Aberdeen (based on total staff costs divided by the number of interviews undertaken) this calculation is very sensitive to the total number of interviews undertaken in a given period.

Moreover, a simple 'cost per RHWI' calculation does not take into account the liaison work the Aberdeen team are undertaking with other agencies which is not related to specific cases. Work which is, arguably, less necessary in Elgin. So although the Aberdeen model appears considerably more expensive, this may be

justifiable on the basis that there is a significant additional element to work of the Aberdeen team. Unfortunately, we do not have a detailed breakdown of time spent on specific cases versus time spent on the liaison work, so are unable to quantify the impact of this.

These strong caveats should be borne in mind when comparing the following costs:

Average cost (staff time) per RHWI in Elgin =£123.34

Average cost (staff time) per RHWI in Aberdeen = £207.69.

Details of how these costs have been calculated are shown in Annex Six.

CONCLUDING POINTS

The principal conclusion is that Return Home Welfare Interviews are an appropriate intervention, helping identify young people who require further support and referring them to an appropriate agency. Even without an onward referral, they can improve outcomes by helping young people appreciate the value of talking about their problems rather than running away. RHWIs are of most benefit to young people not already involved with services (just under a third of those who received a RHWI were not already involved with social services) and some social workers were dubious about their value when young people were already involved with services. However, there can still be some benefits, such as additional information being revealed and additional opportunities to engage.

The RHWIs in both Aberdeen and Elgin were more effective than the practice in Fraserburgh in terms of the quality and depth of information collected and, therefore, the likelihood of identifying support needs and making an appropriate referral.

Aberdeen and Elgin are quite different environments in terms of size, numbers of young runaways, resources and multi-agency working processes. It is therefore difficult to compare the different RHWI models in terms of overall effectiveness and outcomes. Both models generally worked well and each had their own practical issues to contend with. There is no clear evidence that one model is better than the other and so areas should make decisions based on what is likely to work best in their particular local circumstances - taking into account current working practices, numbers of runaways and resources.

Although the Aberdeen model appears considerably more expensive on the basis of a simple 'cost per RHWI' calculation (£208 in Aberdeen compared with £123 in Elgin), this may be justifiable on the basis that there is a significant additional element to the work of the Aberdeen team in liaising with other agencies.

Implications for development

As with any new initiative, a number of issues should be considered were this service to be implemented elsewhere:

- The existing infrastructure of resources in Elgin and Aberdeen was important for the introduction of the RHWI - information on the scale and nature of running away by young people had been considered and responses already developed (i.e. Young Runaways Service)
- Training provided was key in informing civilian workers about police processes; and supporting police workers to identify and address welfare issues in conjunction with intelligence gathering.
- Implementing the initiative required good interagency communication and consultation to secure buy-in from local stakeholders. This can be a time-consuming process but was crucial in securing effective referral processes to support young people.

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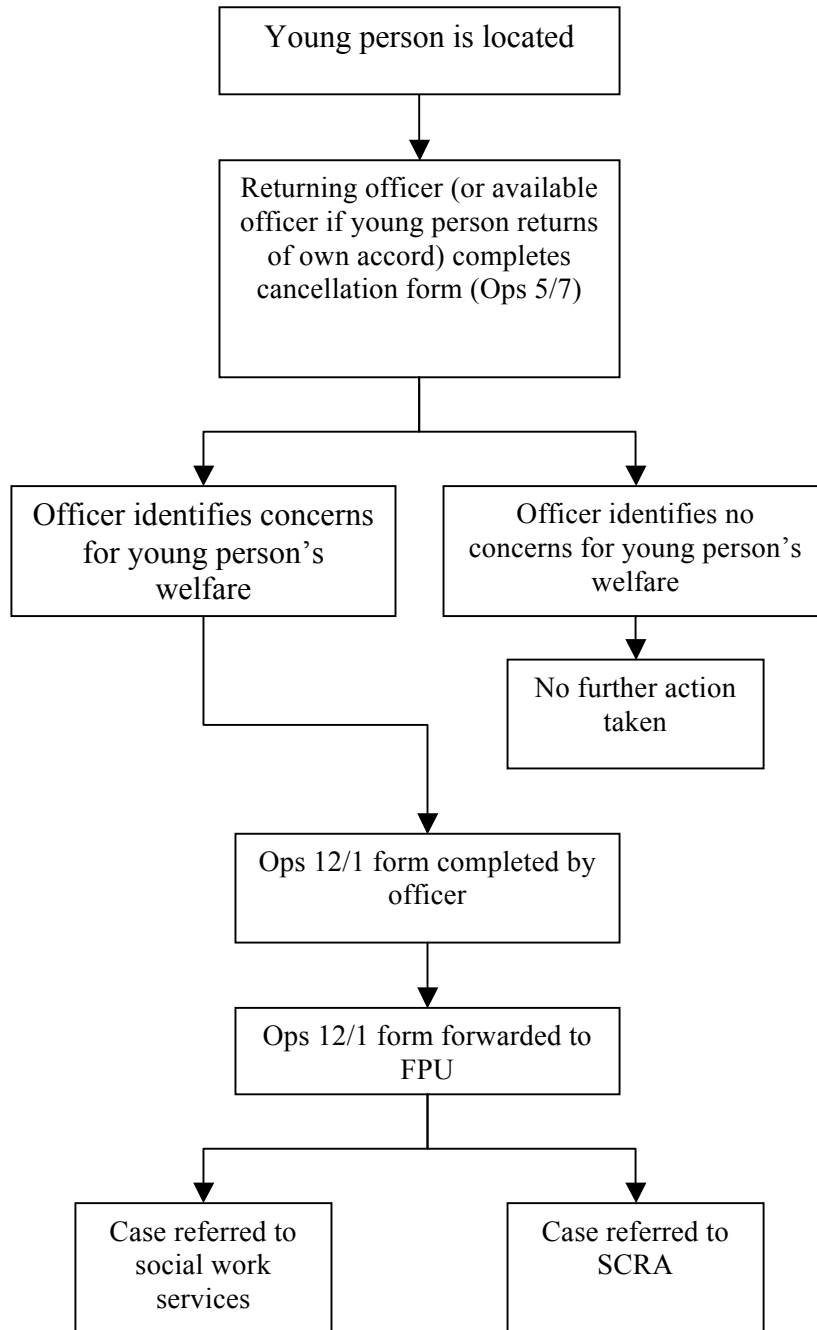
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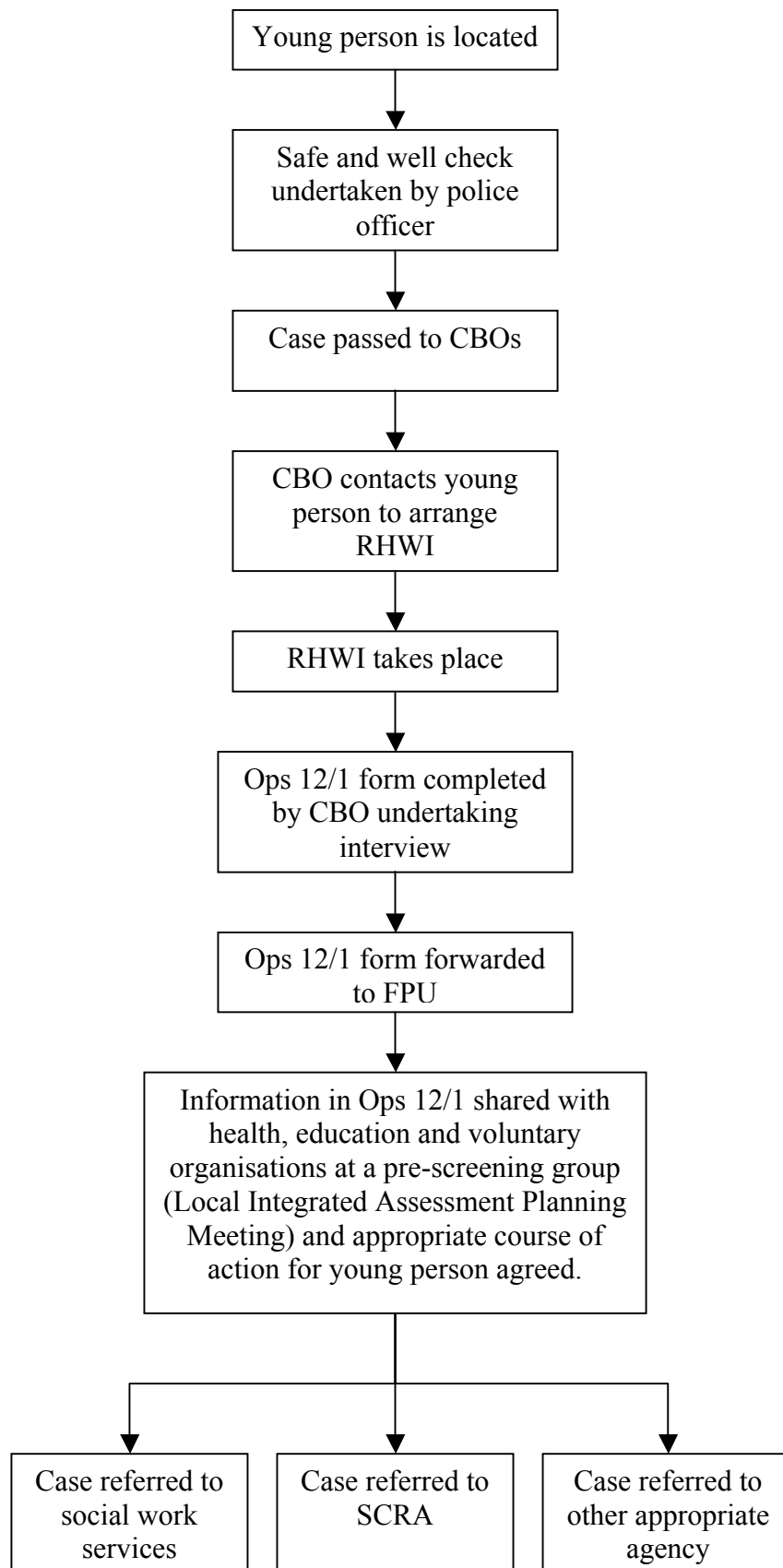
ANNEX ONE

OPERATIONAL FLOWCHARTS

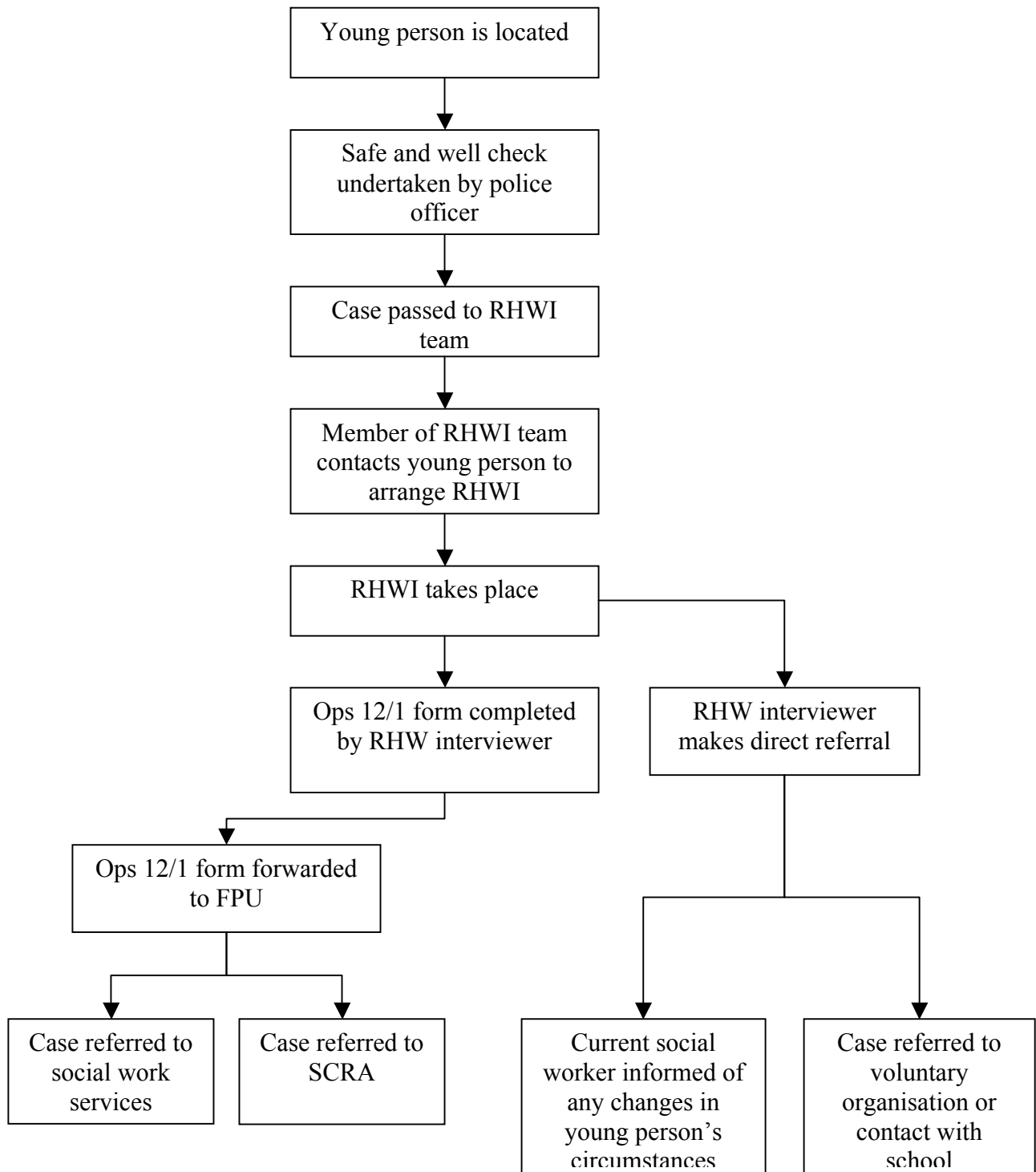
Fraserburgh



Elgin



Aberdeen



ANNEX TWO TABLES REPORTING ON THE ANALYSIS OF THE MONITORING DATA

SAMPLE OVERVIEW

Data was collected regarding all missing incidences involving children and young people under the age of 16 during the pilot evaluation period (26th March 2009 and 26th December 2009). There are some differences in the data collected for pilot areas and the control area due to what was feasible within the resource constraints of the evaluation. In the pilot areas, it was possible to collect in depth data regarding the missing incidences as part of the case management processes put in place by the RHWI team. In the control area, data was electronically extracted from existing management information systems. This data was used to construct three samples for the purpose of analysis: a sample of all incidents reported during the pilot period; a sample of the young people who were the subject of those incident reports; and the interviews that were undertaken in the two pilot areas.

Table 1 Overall numbers of cases analysed

Sample area	Sample		
	Incidences	Young people	Interviews
Aberdeen	376	135	235
Elgin	38	23	26
Fraserburgh	45	18	-
Sample total	459	176	261

YOUNG PEOPLE

The following tables report on the age, sex, ethnicity and patterns of being reported missing.

Table 2 Age of young people at point they were reported missing

Age	Aberdeen	Elgin	Fraserburgh	Total young people
10 and under	9	3	0	12
11	7	1	0	8
12	12	3	0	15
13	25	5	2	32
14	41	4	8	53
15	33	6	7	46
16	4	1	1	6
17	1	0	0	1
Total young people	132	23	18	173

Total number reported on is 173, as there was data missing for 3 young people

Table 3: Sex of the young people reported missing

Sex	Aberdeen	Elgin	Fraserburgh	Total young people
Male	70	7	8	85
Female	65	16	10	91
Total young people	135	23	18	176

Total number reported on is 176, there was no data missing for the sample of young people.

Table 4: Ethnicity of young people reported missing

Age	Aberdeen	Elgin	Fraserburgh	Total young people
White (British or other)	131	23	15	169
Asian (British or other)	1	0	0	1
Black (British or other)	1	0	0	1
Total young people	133	23	15	171

Data missing for 5 young people: 2 Aberdeen and 3 Fraserburgh

Table 5: Living circumstances⁵² of young people reported missing

Where lived	Aberdeen	Elgin	Fraserburgh	Total young people
Family home	100	17	12	129
Foster care	8	1	0	9
Residential care	15	3	6	24
Kinship care	8	1	0	9
Other	1	0	0	1
Total young people	132	22	18	172

Total number reported on is 172, there was data missing for 4 young people (3 in Aberdeen area; 1 in Elgin).

The young person who lived in a setting 'other' to those listed above lived in her own home.

⁵² This is derived from data recorded on the first missing incident, and does not necessarily reflect where young people lived at the point of any subsequent incidents.

Table 6: Who young people lived with

Who lived with	Aberdeen	Elgin	Total young people
Both birth parents	24	5	29
Single birth parent	40	6	46
Step family	17	0	17
Other family	10	2	12
Other (incl foster and residential carers)	25	4	29
Total young people	116	17	133

Data regarding who young people were living with was collected for the pilot areas only. The total number reported on is 133, as data is missing for 19 and 6 young people within the Aberdeen and Elgin areas, respectively.

Table 7: Recorded offending behaviour prior to initial referral to pilot teams

Missing reports on file	Aberdeen	Elgin	Total young people
No record of suspected or proven perpetration of a crime	43	8	51
Record of suspected or proven perpetration of a crime	92	15	107
Total young people	135	23	158

Data regarding past histories of involvement in crime was coded from case records on the young people referred to the pilot areas.

Table 8: Numbers of reported incidences per young person during pilot period

Frequency of incidences	Aberdeen	Elgin	Fraserburgh	Total young people
1	78	16	13	107
2	24	4	2	30
3	10	0	0	10
4	3	1	1	5
5	3	2	0	5
More than 5	17	0	2	19
Total young people	135	23	18	176

Data was available for all 176 young people in the sample.

Table 9: Young people's histories of being reported missing prior to pilot period

Missing reports on file	Aberdeen	Elgin	Total young people
No record of previous missing reports	87	9	96
Record of previous missing reports	48	14	62
Total young people	135	23	158

Data regarding past histories of running was coded from case records on the young people referred to the pilot areas.

Table 10: Numbers of reported incidences per young person during same period in year prior to pilot

Frequency of incidences	Aberdeen	Elgin	Total young people
0	102	15	117
1	16	15	20
2	3	0	3
3	3	0	3
4	2	0	2
5	0	0	0
More than 5	9	1	10
Total young people	135	20	155

Data was missing for 21 young people.

Table 11: Numbers of reported incidences per young person in pre-pilot and pilot period

Frequency of incidences in pre-pilot period	Frequency of incidences in pilot period						Total young people
	1	2	3	4	5	More than 5	
0	79	18	9	3	3	5	117
1	7	7	1	0	0	5	20
2	1	0	0	0	1	1	3
3	1	2	0	0	0	0	3
4	1	0	0	0	0	1	2

5	0	0	0	0	0	0	
More than 5	2	1	0	1	1	5	10
Total young people	91	28	10	4	5	17	155

Data based on incidences for Aberdeen and Elgin only. Periods compared here are 26th March 2008 - 26th March 2009 (pre-pilot) and 26th March 2009 – 26th December 2009 (pilot).

Table 12: Evidence of young person having contact with social services pre-pilot

Contact with social services	Aberdeen	Elgin	Total young people
Yes	89	17	106
No record	46	6	52
Total young people	135	23	158

Data based upon pilot areas only and so reports on 158 young people.

MISSING INCIDENTS

Table 13: Person reporting missing incidence

Person who reported young person missing	Aberdeen	Elgin	Fraserburgh	Total incidents
Parent/main carer	153	26	-	179
Foster carer	18	0	-	18
Residential carer	164	8	-	172
Teacher	21	1	-	22
Other	16	2	-	18
Total incidents	372	37	-	409

Data regarding the missing person reports was collected for the pilot areas only; data on 4 Aberdeen incident reports and 1 Elgin incident report is missing.

Table 14: Place last seen/went missing from

Place young person went missing from	Aberdeen	Elgin	Fraserburgh	Total Incidents
Home	149	25	10	184
Foster care	20	0	0	20
Residential care	162	6	27	195
School	30	4	5	39
Other relatives	3	1	0	4

Other	4	0	1	5
Total incidents	368	36	43	447

Data missing on 12 incidents: 8 Aberdeen, 2 Elgin and 2 Fraserburgh.

Table 15: Time between young person last seen and reported missing

Time between last seen and reported missing (hours)	Aberdeen	Elgin	Fraserburgh	Total Incidents
Up to an hour	72	8	4	84
From 1 up to 6	125	14	16	155
From 6 up to 12	98	11	15	124
From 12 up to 24	53	3	5	61
Over 24 hours	12	1	0	13
Total incidents	360	37	40	437

Data missing on 22 incidents: 16 Aberdeen, 1 Elgin and 5 Fraserburgh.

Case files received by the research team show that in three cases the young person had an agreement with their parent or carer to stay overnight at a friend's house but failed to return home at the agreed time and in one case there was a miscommunication between the young person and their parent regarding the time they were allowed to stay out till. It is not possible to comment on the rest of the cases as this information was not recorded in the case files received.

Table 16: Risk grading allocated to incident

Risk grading	Aberdeen	Elgin	Fraserburgh	Total Incidents
High	9	11	0	20
Medium	102	14	11	127
Low	249	13	34	296
Total incidents	360	38	45	443

Data missing on 16 incidents: all Aberdeen incidents.

Table 17: Time between recorded 'last seen' and 'identified'

Time between last seen and being identified (hours)	Aberdeen	Elgin	Fraserburgh	Total incidents
Up to an hour	4	1	1	6

From 1 up to 6	87	12	7	106
From 6 up to 12	85	9	12	106
From 12 up to 24	99	9	13	121
From 24 on	84	6	5	95
Total incidents	359	37	38	434

Data missing on 25 incidents: 17 Aberdeen, 1 Elgin and 7 Fraserburgh.

This table and the following two tables are based on information as it is recorded by the police. It reflects the time that the person was 'last seen' by the person reporting them missing and the point at which a young person has returned home or has come to the attention of the police. This may be when a Safe and Well check or noting of cancellation details takes place, or when the police have been informed by a responsible person (i.e. parent/carer) that the young person has returned either voluntarily or been located.

Table 18: Time between reported missing and identified

Time between being reported and being identified (hours)	Aberdeen	Elgin	Fraserburgh	Total Incidents
Up to an hour	52	5	7	64
From 1 up to 6	146	17	16	179
From 6 up to 12	66	8	10	84
From 12 up to 24	70	8	6	84
From 24	34	0	3	37
Total incidents	368	38	42	448

Data missing on 11 incidents: 8 Aberdeen and 3 Fraserburgh.

Table 19: Process of being identified: traced or returned⁵³?

Traced or returned	Aberdeen	Elgin	Fraserburgh	Total Incidents
Traced	130	18	20	168
Returned	245	20	24	289
Total incidents	375	38	44	457

Data missing on 2 incidents: 1 Aberdeen and 1 Fraserburgh.

RETURN HOME WELFARE INTERVIEWS

Table 20: Number of interviews covering single and multiple incidences

Number of missing incidences per	Aberdeen	Elgin	Total Interviews

⁵³Traced is the term used to indicate that a young person has been located; returned indicates that they have returned voluntarily to their home or place they were reported missing.

interview			
1	190	22	212
2	29	4	33
3	7	0	7
4	5	0	5
6	3	0	3
7	1	0	1
Total interviews	235	26	261

Data is available for all 261 interviews

Table 21: Number of incidences (misper reports) each month in pilot period

Month of misper report	Number of incidences			Total
	Aberdeen	Elgin	Fraserburgh	
March	10	3	1	14
April	53	5	0	58
May	52	6	10	68
June	43	10	5	58
July	43	3	5	51
August	56	4	9	69
September	52	3	4	59
October	17	1	6	24
November	36	3	5	44
December	13	0	0	13
Total	375	38	45	458

Table 22: Number of interviews attended by individual young people (N=157)

Number of interviews attended by young person	Aberdeen	Elgin	
0	11	3	14
1	77	15	92
2	25	4	29
3	7	1	8
4	5	0	5
5	3	0	3
6	1	0	1
7	2	0	2

10	1	0	1
11	2	0	2
Total young people	134	23	157

Data missing for 1 young person

Table 23: Time between being identified and RHWI

Time between first incident covered & interview date	Aberdeen	Elgin	Total interviews
The same day	29	1	30
From 1 up to 5 days	124	3	127
From 5 up to 7 days	38	4	42
From 7 up to 14 days	26	9	35
14 days or later	12	9	21
Total interviews	229	26	255

Data missing for 6 interviews: all Aberdeen cases.

Table 24: Location of RHWIs

Location	Aberdeen	Elgin	Total
Home	100	6	106
Foster care	6	0	6
Residential care	84	4	88
School	30	0	30
Relative's house	5	0	5
Other ⁵⁴	3	15	18
Total interviews	228	25	253

Data missing for 8 interviews: 7 Aberdeen and 1 Elgin.

Table 25: Duration of RHWIs

⁵⁴ Interviews in Elgin generally take place at Action for Children premises in the town or at a joint run SWD/Police facility used for Joint Investigative Interviewing.

Time (minutes)	Aberdeen	Elgin	Total Interviews
Up to 30	97	10	107
From 30 to 60	52	2	54
From 60 to 90	40	1	41
From 90 mins...	17	4	21
Total interviews	206	17	223

Data missing for 38 interviews: 29 Aberdeen and 9 Elgin. In the main this is due to changes in data collection procedures during the initial phase of the pilot.

Table 26: Reasons identified during the course of the RHWI

Main reason established	Aberdeen	Elgin	Total interviews
Linked to family	36	1	37
Linked to boundaries	69	11	80
Linked to peers	64	7	71
Linked to school	15	3	18
Other	27	2	29
Total interviews	211	24	235

Data was not recorded for 26 interviews: 24 Aberdeen and 2 Elgin.

Table 27: Risks identified during the course of the RHWI

Main risk established	Aberdeen	Elgin	Total interviews
None identified	53	14	67
Risky social environments	42	4	46
Evidence of physical risk	10	3	13
Evidence of sexual risk	3	0	3
Evidence of substance use	31	2	33
Evidence of multiple risks	65	1	66
Total interviews	204	24	228

Data was not recorded for 33 interviews: 31 Aberdeen and 2 Elgin.

Table 28: Issues identified during course of RHWI

Issues identified	Aberdeen	Elgin	Total interviews
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Yes	167	14	181
No	51	12	63
Total interviews	218	26	244

Data was not recorded for 16 interviews, all Aberdeen

Table 29: Numbers of referrals made per interview as a result of RHWIs

Number of referrals	Aberdeen	Elgin	Total interviews
0	7	3	10
1	113	15	128
2	91	6	97
3	24	2	26
Total interviews	235	26	261

Table 30: Numbers of referrals made to different agencies as a result of RHWIs

RHWI resulted in a referral to:	Aberdeen	Elgin	Total referrals made
The reporter	102	3	105
Current social worker	165	17	182
New social worker	59	7	66
Other	41	6	47
Total referrals made	367	33	400

ANNEX THREE

DATA ON CRIME AND VICTIMISATION

Background data on children and young people's past and current involvement in crime

The monitoring data collated and transferred to the evaluation team by the RHWI coordinator represents a rich source of data and has been integral to the conduct of the evaluation. The datasets produced for the evaluation could be built upon to explore specific areas of relevance to young runaways and approaches for preventing or reducing running away.

Following the drafting of the interim report, and comments by the evaluation sub-group members, we undertook to produce variables for analysis of children and young people's experiences of and involvement in crime⁵⁵ (i.e. as victims of, witnesses to and perpetrators to).

Young people have been:

- Victims of crimes – including non-sexual crimes of violence and crimes of indecency.
- Witness to crimes - non-sexual crimes of violence; crimes of indecency; crimes involving dishonesty; and other crimes.
- Perpetrators of crimes – including non-sexual crimes of violence; crimes of indecency; crimes involving dishonesty; fire-raising/vandalism; other crimes; and miscellaneous offences.

Often the crime that they have been victim or witness to appears to have been intra-familial, or within their social networks.

Coding attempted for the final report

The case files include a record of past incidences of suspected or actual crimes committed against the child or young person, in front of the child or young person, or by the child or young person. In relation to the latter there is more detailed data on what happened following an allegation. When reading through the files to be entered in the evaluation datasets, we were struck by the variation and range of experiences of crime i.e. in relation to victim/witness/perpetrator; type of crime committed; and by the frequency of experiences/involvement. Therefore, we developed a coding scheme that aimed to count the number of incidences by type of crime and by what involvement the child or young person had had. We attempted to do this for two time periods: a period of 9 months in the previous year, matching the period that we had data for the pilot evaluation, and for the period of the evaluation.

This has the potential to explore relationships between victimisation, witness and perpetration of crime and levels of running away among the population of young people referred to Elgin and Aberdeen. It may also offer some insight into if and how an intervention such as the RHWI project could have an impact on improving outcomes for children and young people.

⁵⁵ Terms used link to the classifications used in the Scottish Government Statistical Bulletin Crime and Justice Series: Recorded Crime in Scotland (2008-2009).

However, this proved to be an extremely time consuming task due to the need to match records for the same incidences from different information systems (e.g. same incident may be recorded in YJMU and CRIMEFILE) and for the need for careful attention to detail to ensure accuracy. For example, it took one hour to code three cases, which with 168 young people this would take 56 hours to complete.

To complete the task would also have involved a number of further conversations with police personnel to clarify the meaning of terminology, and their perspective on the most appropriate time frames to use (our proposed timeframe above could skew understanding of levels of involvement if young people were involved in crime in the period falling between the two above).

Consequently, we took a decision to revert to the very simple coding scheme used for the interim report and to propose that this piece of work be undertaken in addition to and to supplement the evaluation project if it was considered to be of value to Grampian police, the evaluation sub-group or the Scottish Government.

Additional data that could be coded alongside is evidence relating to young people's mental health as there is information recorded on suicide attempts, self-harm and apparently harmful use of drugs and alcohol. This would support understanding of the very real difficulties that characterise the previous context to the lives of many young people who run away.

ANNEX FOUR TRAINING

Aim:

To ensure participants are able to plan and conduct a return home welfare interview showing due consideration of the different components of the interview and the young person's age and developmental needs.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Demonstrate a practical understanding of the interview process and its different components: including evidence, risk and welfare issues;
2. Conduct a RHWI to a satisfactory standard in accordance with evidential requirements in a child centred way;
3. Record a RHWI to a satisfactory standard and in accordance with evidential requirements;
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the needs of the individual young person.

Issues covered:

(With input from Averil Duncan, Grampian Police; Melanie Stone, Barnardo's; Martin Henry, Scottish Coalition for Young Runaways)

- Aims and objectives
- Background
- Professional Roles
- Definitions
- RHWI Process
- Interviewing Missing Children and Young Runaways
- An Introduction to Risk Assessment
- Assessing Risk and Making Decisions
- Return Home Welfare Interview (role plays and video recording)

Material was disseminated through presentations and discussions; role playing and group exercises.

Aberdeen case study 1:**Karen, aged 14, living at home – services already in place**

Karen has lived with her grandparents since she was five due to parental substance use. Karen experienced bullying from the start of secondary school and moved schools after first year. Karen's attendance has recently reduced again. The school staff, particularly Karen's Guidance Teacher, have been very supportive of Karen and her grandparents. Karen has had a social worker from a local Family Centre for two years.

Karen was reported missing by her grandparents twice in 2009 and had two Return Home Welfare Interviews. She had not previously gone missing. Both times she was with friends and on one occasion stayed out all night at the house of people she did not know. She said this made her quite anxious and she couldn't sleep because she didn't know what might happen.

The Return Home Welfare Interviews with Karen took place at her house about two days later. The first one was arranged in advance with Karen's grandmother, so she felt she didn't have much choice about it herself. However, she found it helpful to talk to the interviewer both by herself and together with her grandmother. Karen found the interviewer understanding and could talk to her about most of her problems. She said '*I didn't class her as a police officer, just as someone who wanted to help*'. The interviewer gave Karen advice about what to do if she ran away again such as letting her grandparents know she was safe and gave her a card with her phone number so that she could talk things over. A referral was made to the FPU.

Recently Karen has been referred by social work services to the Family Centre and three other services including Outreach services and a support service for children who have been abused. Karen says she has thought about running away or not coming back when she should but she remembered what the Return Home Welfare Interviewer said to her about the dangers she could experience and has decided against.

Aberdeen case study 2:

Paul, aged 15, living at home – no services previously in place

Paul lives with his mother and step-father. His step-father has substance misuse issues and there are often arguments between Paul and his step-father. Paul does not have a history of running away but a serious argument occurred between Paul and his step-father after he accused Paul of stealing money from his wallet. Paul left the house at 4pm and was reported missing at 11pm. He returned home at 11am the next morning. Paul had called for his friend and they had taken a tent and camped out all night. The RHWI took place three days later and Paul spoke openly with the RHW interviewer. His mother was in the house but not present at the interview. The RHWI identified that there are serious relationship difficulties between Paul and the adults in his home. A referral was made to the FPU with information about Paul's difficulties which it was thought might warrant referral to social work services.

Aberdeen case study 3:

Donna, aged 16, living in a residential unit – services in place

Donna has been living in a residential unit for two years. She was accommodated due to conflict at home as her mother tried but was unable to set boundaries around her behaviour. It was considered that Donna was engaging in behaviour which may put her at risk. Donna has a number of crime-related incidents recorded including some minor offences, on two occasions she has been the victim of an assault. Donna has been reported missing from the residential unit on numerous occasions, usually with other young people from the unit. Donna is involved with the Barnardo's Young Runaways Service and with Child and Adolescent Mental health services.

Donna has had four RHWIs. On the last occasion which led to a RHWI she had left the unit late at night and gone to a party with other young people. They returned in the early hours of the morning and were very intoxicated. The risks identified for Donna include criminal activity and the misuse of drink and drugs. At the RHWI, which took place five days later, Donna did not reveal very much information. The RHWI led to information which the FPU passed on to SCRA.

Elgin case study 1:**Ruth, aged 15, living at home – services already in place**

Ruth lives with members of her extended family who have been known to social work services for several years. Ruth is having problems at school and is very unhappy there. Ruth has been witness to a number of violent incidents in her home and the family has had contact with the Domestic Abuse Liaison Officer. Ruth went missing from school early one afternoon and did not return home until late in the evening. She ran away on her own and was considered very vulnerable.

The CBO/RHWI took place six days after the running away episode. The RHWI coordinator interviewer contacted the social worker first to find out more about the family circumstances. The interviewer was able to obtain information about Ruth's problems at school but very little about her difficulties at home. A referral was made to Ruth's social worker which contained information obtained at the interview.

Elgin case study 2:**John, aged 13, living at home – no services**

John lives with his father and mother and was not known to services prior to the episode of running away. John went missing straight after school one day with two friends and was reported missing at 9pm. The boys took a tent and camped out all night and did not return home until the following morning. On his return John said that one of his friends was having problems at home and didn't want to go home that night.

John was contacted by the CBO/RHW interviewer who visited John at home four days later. John was open about what had happened and did not report any problems at home. The interviewer gave John a card with a phone number to ring in case he thought about running away again so that he could talk over the alternatives. The CBO/RHW interviewer made a referral to the Integrated Children's Assessment Planning Group.

Elgin case study 3:

Mary, aged 15, living in a residential unit – services in place

Mary has lived in a residential unit since the age of twelve since her foster care placement broke down. She has been accommodated since the age of eight due to child protection concerns at home. Police records show that Mary has a small number of reports of shoplifting and has been a witness on two occasions to a Breach of the Peace. Mary has recently been reported missing on three occasions by residential staff. She has a boyfriend who lives in a nearby town and with whom she has regular arguments. Mary was reported missing at 11pm after an argument with her boyfriend on the phone, followed by an argument with residential staff. She returned to the unit in the early hours of the following morning.

The CBO/RHW interviewer met with Mary at the residential unit. She was not very forthcoming with information about what had happened to her while she was missing. The RHW interviewer made a referral to Mary's current social worker.

Fraserburgh case study 1:

Susan, aged 14, living at home – services already in place

Susan lives with her mother, father and siblings. Susan ran away on three occasions within a few months; she said this was because of 'things going on in the house'. The last time Susan ran away she stayed the night at the house of someone she knew. Two police officers called to see Susan on the day after she returned home and again two days later. She knew one of the officers because he had previously charged her with a minor offence. She did not find it easy to talk to them because she felt shocked to see them and also because her parents were present. She felt that the matter was over and done with and the officers suddenly coming to the door had brought it back up again.

Susan has had a social worker for two years although she had not had much contact with them. She has recently been allocated a new social worker who is helping her with problems at school. She also attends a youth club and she can talk to the youth workers there. Susan said that she has no intention of running away again. She regrets having run away and came home because she was missing her dad.

Fraserburgh case study 2:**Rowan, aged 15, living in a residential unit – services in place**

Rowan has lived in a residential unit for one year, prior to which she stayed in temporary foster care. She was accommodated because of parental substance misuse. Rowan has been reported missing on several occasions; she said this was because of general unhappiness with her family difficulties rather than any particular problems at the unit. On the last occasion Rowan failed to return in the evening and was found at 1am in the town. Rowan has had Cancellation Interviews from officers from two towns in the area. She said that she found the approach of the officers from one town helpful because they were friendly and she felt she could trust them enough to be open with them. The other approach had been difficult for her because they were blaming her for wasting their time when they could be attending to real crimes. They had asked many questions which she didn't feel were relevant.

Rowan has a social worker and a residential keyworker who she gets on well with. She knows that there is a Children's Right's Worker who she could contact with any problems. She thinks she is unlikely to run away again as she has been told she could have to go to a Secure Unit. Rowan's view is that a RHWI would be a good idea because speaking to someone a few days later would give people a bit more time to think about why they had run and 'make more sense' when answering the questions. She thinks it should be by the police or someone from a charity who works with young people rather than social workers because she feels that they have the power to decide what happens to young people.

Fraserburgh case study 3:**Fiona, aged 14, living in a residential unit – services in place**

Fiona has recently moved to a residential unit because of a breakdown in family relationships. She was reported missing from the residential unit with a friend who later returned to the unit by herself. Fiona stayed out all night and returned in the morning. At 11am the same day two policemen came to speak with her about why she had run away. She did not find the interview very helpful as the staff were present and this inhibited her from speaking openly. Also, she said that the policemen spent half the interview speaking with the staff and she felt that they were not really listening to her. Fiona said she would have preferred it if her social worker had been present, as she trusts her.

Since the interview Fiona has not run away again, partly due to the dangers the police officers described about what could have happened to her. She had also felt unsafe when she was on her own. Her social worker was told about her running away and has arranged for her to meet with a youth worker. Fiona thinks that a Help Line would be useful for young people to call if they wanted to talk about their problems.

ANNEX SIX COST CALCULATIONS

The average cost per RHWI was arrived at using the following assumptions and calculations.

Elgin estimate

On the basis of the time recorded against each case by Elgin officers (between 27 March 2009 and 27 November 2009, covering 36 cases), the average amount of time per case was 165 minutes (46 minutes preparation, 74 minutes interview and travel, and 45 minutes follow-up)

Constable salary is £36,140.25 pa⁵⁶. Including on-costs of 30% (recharge for pensions) and 9.38% (employer's NI) this is a total cost of £50,372.28 pa.⁵⁷

Based on a 40 hour week (2400 minutes), with 31 days leave⁵⁸ (23 days plus 8 public holidays which is 14880 mins holiday per year), there are 109920 actual working minutes per year (2400*52 less 14880)

Total salary costs are therefore £0.4583 per minute worked (£50,372.28 total salary cost/109920 mins worked)

Average cost of CBO's time per RHWI case = 165*£0.4583=£75.62

We also need to calculate the cost of the Co-ordinator's input to Elgin work. Based on the timesheets completed by the Co-ordinator over 14 weeks (between November 2009 and March 2010) a total of 41.43 hours was spent on Elgin work. This is 8.16% of Co-ordinator's time spent on Elgin work (41.43 hours/ (14 weeks*36.25 working hours per week)) which equates to 2.44 hours per case in total - though this includes time spent on more general Elgin admin.

Average cost (Co-ordinator's time) per Elgin RHWI = (8.16% of £31,579.93⁵⁹ = £2,576.92)/54⁶⁰= £47.72

Total average cost of RHWI for Elgin = £75.62 CBO plus £47.72 Co-ordinator = **£123.34**

⁵⁶ This is the 2010-2011 top salary point for a CBO – costs could be lower if CBOs on lower salary points undertook the RHWIs. The figure does not include any rent/housing allowance.

⁵⁷ All salary, national insurance and pension/superannuation costs have been provided by Grampian Police.

⁵⁸ To make a fairer comparison with the Aberdeen model (where the costs of paid holidays are included in the salary costs of staff), we need to include the costs of paid holidays in the cost per actual minute worked.

⁵⁹ See Aberdeen calculation below for an explanation of how this total salary cost figure for the Co-ordinator was derived.

⁶⁰ Notional number of Elgin cases per year based on 36 cases over 8 months

Aberdeen estimate

It is unrealistic to assume that either police officers or police staff can spend 100% of their working time on specific cases/projects. To allow a fairer comparison of costs, it is necessary to assume that a certain amount of police officers and police staff time will be spent on the more general tasks (checking emails, answering phone calls, liaising with colleagues, attending general meetings/briefings etc) that are required simply by being employed by an organisation. We have assumed that 1 hour per day is spent on these very general tasks. If we did not make this assumption, we would be artificially inflating the cost of Aberdeen model because this hour would be attributed to RHWI case work in the Aberdeen calculations whereas it would not be included in the Elgin calculations. In Elgin, we know that an average of 165 minutes is spent on each RHWI case. The amount of time per day spent by Elgin officers on very general tasks is irrelevant to this particular calculation⁶¹.

The %age of Aberdeen staff time spent on these very general tasks is therefore 13.7% (5 hours every 36.25 hours worked).

Co-ordinator salary is £28,836.25 pa. Including on-costs of 19.2% (Superannuation) and 7.7% (employer's NI) this is a total cost of £36,593.20 pa. Assuming 13.7% of these costs attributed to very general tasks, the cost for the RHWI calculation is £31,579.93 pa.

91.84% of Co-ordinator's total salary cost (100% less 8.16% spent on Elgin time) at total cost of £31,579.93 pa = £29,003.01

100% of RHW interviewer (Police Support staff) at total cost of £31,579.93 pa (taking into account very general tasks)

100% of RHW interviewer (Constable) at total cost of £43,471.28 (86.3% of £50,372.28 pa to take account of time spent on very general tasks)

Total Aberdeen staff costs = £104,054.22 pa

Cost per RHWI = £104,054.22/501⁶² = **£207.69**

⁶¹ Adjusting the assumption downwards (e.g. to 45 minutes per day spent on very general tasks) would increase the cost of the Aberdeen model (the Elgin costs would be unaffected). Adjusting the assumption upwards (e.g. to 90 minutes per day) would decrease the cost of the Aberdeen model (again, the Elgin costs would be unaffected).

⁶² Notional number of Aberdeen cases per year based on 376 cases over 9 months

ANNEX SEVEN

AGENCIES

Agencies contacted by the RHWI team included:

ACIS counselling
ART
ASBO unit (Grampian Police)
Barnardos
CAMHS Social Work
Children 1st
DALO (Grampian Police)
DASH
General Practitioner
Give Kids a Chance
Moray Youth Action
Operation Youth Advantage
RRLO
Schools
Social work services
Young Runaways Service

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