**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES CABINET PANEL**
**WEDNESDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 2018 AT 10.00AM**

Agenda Item
No.

**5**

**CHILDREN MISSING FROM HOME AND LOCAL AUTHORITY CARE ANNUAL REPORT 2016 - 2017**

*Report of the Director of Children's Services*

Authors:-       Kate Lochmuller, Team Manager Analytical and Information
                Services Hertfordshire County Council (Tel: 01992 556861)

                Zaynab Aslam, Missing Children Co-Ordinator Safeguarding and
                Specialist Services Hertfordshire County Council
                (Tel: 01438 843934)

Executive Member:-    Teresa Heritage, Executive Member Children's Services

**1.      Purpose of report**

1.1     The following report provides a breakdown of the number of children missing from home and care and the number of missing episodes, between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017.

**2.      Summary**

2.1     The annual report was shared with the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Board at its meeting on the 8th December 2017.

2.2     The Panel is asked to endorse the report and make any further recommendations to strengthen the multi-disciplinary approach to supporting children who go missing from home or care.

**3.      Recommendation**

3.1     That the Cabinet Panel comments and notes the Annual Report and the continued focus to improve the rate of engagement and prevention.

**4.      Background**

4.1     The annual report is prepared by the Strategic Safeguarding Adolescent Group, a sub- group of the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Board. The full report, as presented to the Board on the 8th December is attached at appendix 1.

4.2 The annual report provides a breakdown of the number of children and missing episodes from home and care between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017.

4.3 Children Services and Hertfordshire Constabulary oversee a risk tracker for Hertfordshire's children who go missing in order to differentiate those who go missing for short periods (e.g. staying with friends) and those children who are repeatedly going missing and there are concerns about their welfare. This information is gathered from the child's social worker, from police intelligence and from information gleaned at return home interviews.

4.4 Those children most at risk from Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and missing are managed through the multi-agency SEARCH panel (Sexual Exploitation and Runaway Children in Hertfordshire) which meets monthly. Following the meeting there is a closed session with managers from Children's Servicers and Hertfordshire Constabulary to discuss emerging risk and operational investigations that the police are managing in order to problem solve and information share across the agency sphere.

4.5 When missing children become repeat missing a number of active interventions are put into place ranging from strategy discussions, liaison with brokerage if looked after, multi-agency problem solving, MARM (multi agency risk management meetings), on-going intelligence collection and briefing in order to bring the missing episode to an end.

4.6 In Hertfordshire in 2016/2017, the total number of children recorded as missing increased by 1.4% from 907 in 2015/16 to 920. However the number of times children and young people went missing only saw a slight increase at 0.73% (2202 to 2218). These figures were in line with national figures and with population.

4.7 For those missing from care in this period, we saw a downward trend for the first time in 3 years. Our systems for recording missing episodes are robust and the focus on preventative measures; clear placement expectations and learning from return home interviews for our looked after children, has all had a positive impact.

4.8 The data at appendix 1 shows that the number of missing episodes increased the older the child. More recent data (November 2017) shows that 54% of children looked after who went missing were aged 16 and 17 years old.

4.9 In terms of duration of missing episodes, 69% of the total missing episodes from care were for less than 24hours. Of the remaining 31%, a formal Need to Know process and a Multi-Agency Risk Management Meeting was held in order to ensure a multi-agency risk management plan was in place.

4.10 The data in Appendix 1 shows there was a significant decrease in missing episodes in three of the four residential homes. In the home where an increase in missing was seen, this was due to two young people who repeatedly absconded and influenced others to do so. Social Workers / Residential Staff and police worked together to share information and to co-ordinate actions to resolve this.

## 5.    Financial Implications

5.1    Given the continuing promising results of the commissioned Return Home Interview Service, efforts are currently being made to secure ongoing funding to agree the continuation of the contract with the charity Missing People.

## 6.    Equalities Implications

6.1    When considering proposals placed before Members it is important that they are fully aware of, and have themselves rigorously considered the equality implications of the decision that they are making.

6.2    Rigorous consideration will ensure that proper appreciation of any potential impact of that decision on the County Council's statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty.  As a minimum this requires decision makers to read and carefully consider the content of any Equalities Impact Assessment (EQiA) produced by officers.

6.3    The Equality Act 2010 requires the County Council when exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

6.4    No EqIA was undertaken in relation to this report

| Report to the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Board | |
|---|---|
| Date of meeting: | 8th December 2017 |
| Title of report: | Children Missing from Home and Local Authority Care |
| Report authors: | Kate Lochmuller; Zaynab Aslam |

**Annual Data Report 2016 -17**

**1. Purpose of the report**
The following report provides a breakdown of the number of children and missing episodes from home and care between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017.

**2. Actions/Decisions required**
The Board is asked to adopt the report and make any further recommendations to strengthen the multidisciplinary approach to supporting missing children from home and in care as effectively as possible.

## 3. Introduction

Those children most at risk from CSE and missing are managed through the multi-agency SEARCH panel which meets monthly. Following the meeting there is a closed session with managers to discuss emerging risk and operational investigations that the police are managing in order to problem solve and information share across the agency sphere.

When missing children become repeat missing a number of active interventions are put into place ranging from strategy discussions, liaison with brokerage if looked after, multi-agency problem solving, MARM (multi agency risk management meetings), on-going intelligence collection and briefing in order to bring the missing episode to an end.

In Hertfordshire in 2016/2017, the total number of children recorded as missing increased by 1.4% from 907 in 2015/16 to 920. However the number of times children and young people went missing only saw a slight increase at 0.73% (2202 to 2218). These figures were in line with national figures and with population.
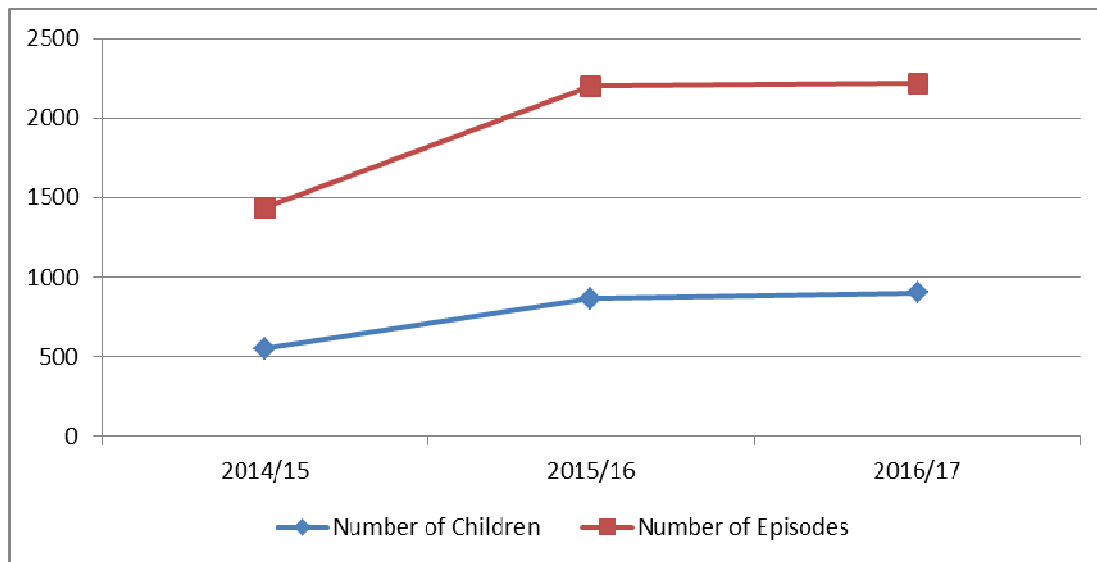
For those missing from care in this period, we saw a downward trend for the first time in 3 years. Our systems for recording missing episodes are robust and the focus on preventative measures; clear placement expectations and learning from return home interviews for our looked after children, has all had a positive impact.

**4. Summary of statistics for Hertfordshire**

- As in previous years there continued to be a strong focus in 2016-17 (age group 11+-17) on the recording and reporting of missing episodes of children and young people. We continued to develop and adapt robust systems to capture data. This is reflected throughout this report.

- In terms of the population size of Hertfordshire, the mid -year estimate for 2016 (0 to 17) showed an increase of +1.02%, up from 264,300 in 2015 to 267,000 in 2016. We saw an increase in population size year on year, and we are likely to see the number of young people recorded as missing also increasing.

- Overall there was a very small increase in the number of reported missing episodes in 2016-17, a 0.73% increase on 2015/16. The number of children missing also increased from 907 to 920 in the last year, a 1.43% increase. These increases are not significant and in fact are particularly small. As 2016/17 saw a decrease in the number of looked after children missing, the small increase in number came from those missing from home.

- In 2016/17 76.6% of all missing episodes were under 24 hours.  In total 96% of the missing episodes recorded in the last year were for less than 5 days.

- During this reporting period, there was a drop in the number of children in care going missing. 176 children were recorded as missing; a 13% drop on the previous year (202). The number of missing episodes also decreased going from 986 to 899; a 9% drop on 2015/16.

- Of those children who were missing from either home or care, the gender split saw more males missing in the year. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that involvement in gangs, sexual exploitation and County Lines may explain this gender bias. Through RHI data, it is evident many of these young people are missing due to socialising or issues in school.

- 33 children (3.6%) (Recorded with a disability on our social care management system) were identified as missing. 16 of these children had 3+ missing episodes. Additionally, the majority of

5

these young people were also recorded in the behaviour, emotional, and/or social category. Of those who went missing frequently, 10 were diagnosed as being on the Autism spectrum.

- During this reporting period, at the time the child or young person went missing 20 were subject to a Child Protection Plan (2.2%)  The geographical locations of where these children and young people were missing are shown below.
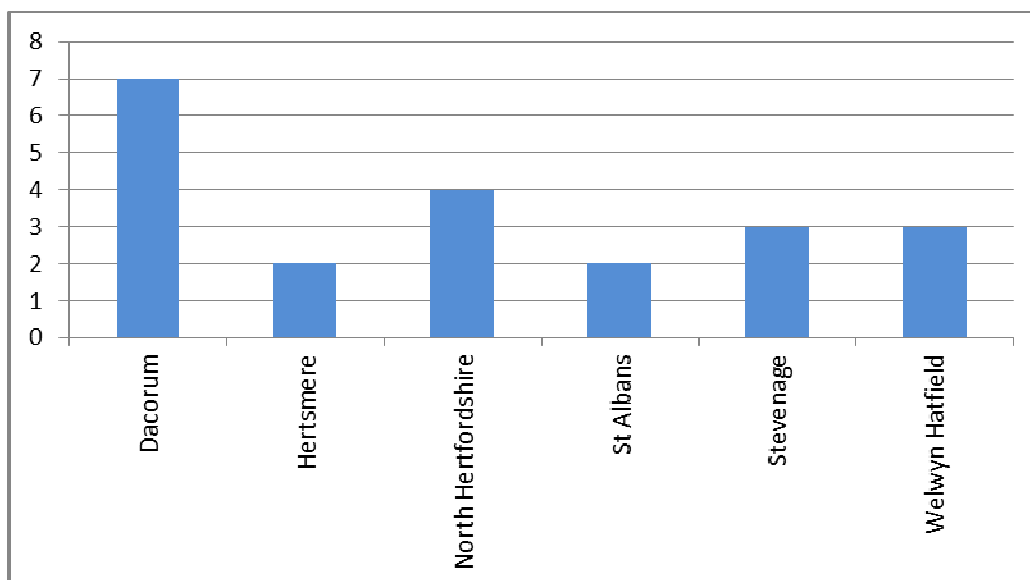


- In 2016/17, 13 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) were recorded as missing. These young people account for 22 occasions. The number of UASC missing dropped by 22% on the previous year's figure. This was in line with reducing numbers of UASC coming into care in Hertfordshire.

- 72.9% of all those missing from care were identified as White British. This is almost identical to the figure for 2015-16 which was 72.8%. The figure for children missing from home is almost identical with 71.8% of all missing children identified as White British.

**Comparison of data 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-**17 for all children
*For the purpose of this data collection, missing children refers to both children and young people. All of the data is taken from LCS.*

|  | Number of episodes 2014-15 | Number of children 2014-15 | Number of episodes 2015-16 | Number of children 2015-16 | Number of episodes 2016-17 | Number of children 2016-17 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Missing from Care** | 778 | 135 | 986 | 202 | 899 | 176 |
| **Missing from home** | 658 | 414 | 1216 | 705 | 1319 | 744 |
| **All** | **1436** | **549** | **2202** | **907** | **2218** | **920** |
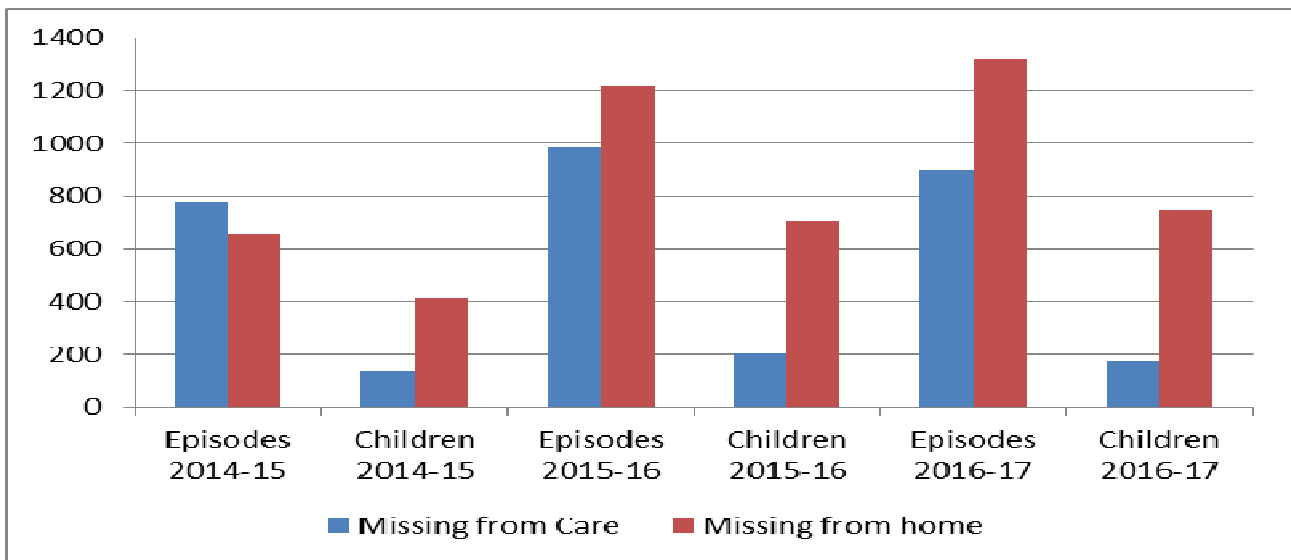
## 5. Benchmarking Data for Looked After Children

Data published by the DFE for 2016/17 is shown below. The data is broken down into two sub groups, to display Hertfordshire's performance in both the Eastern Region and against statistical neighbours.

### East of England

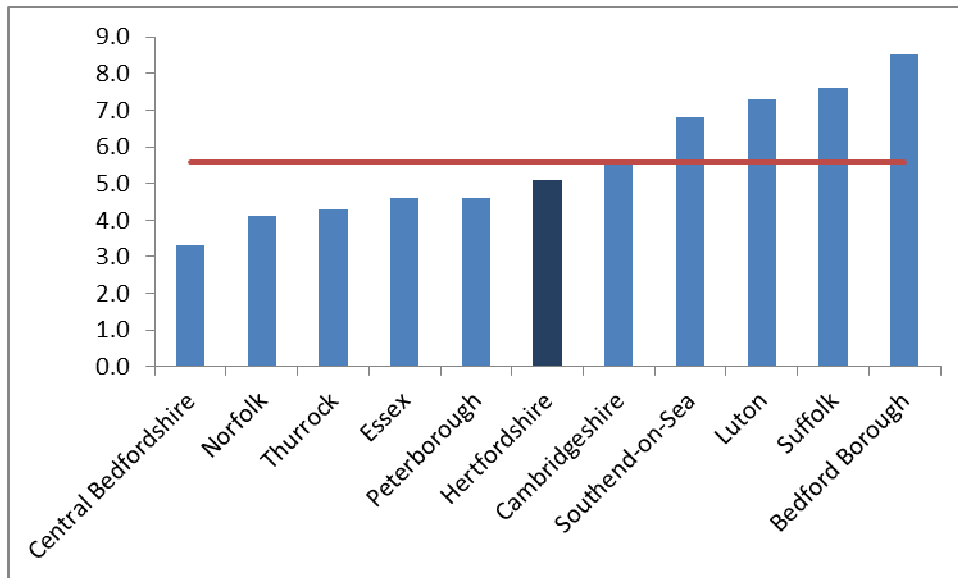**Percentage of CLA that had a missing incident during the year 2016/17**
- Performance – Above average
- Note – The average for the region was 12%, Hertfordshire sat just slightly above this at 13%.
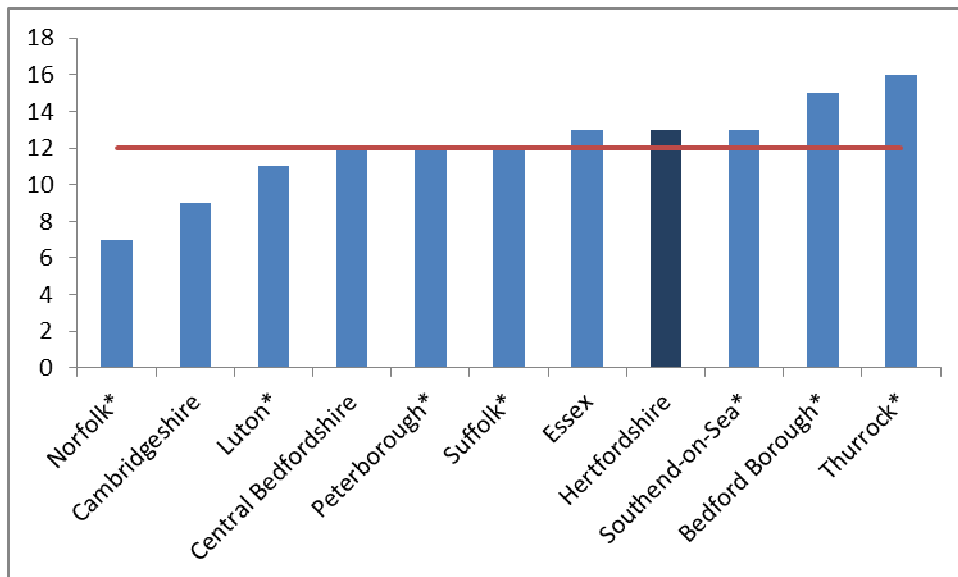


- \* In 2017, some local authorities informed the department that they do not record incidents as 'away without authorisation' but instead report all incidents as 'missing' to maintain consistency with local police reporting. We estimate this could mean an overestimate of missing incidents of up to 3% and an undercount of away  (Children Looked  After in England 2016 to 2017  GOV.UK)
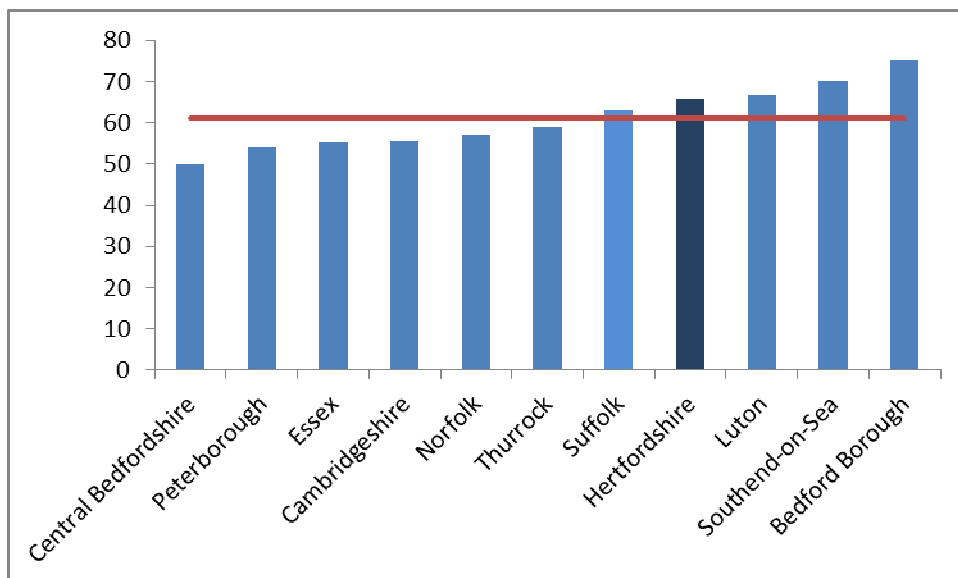
**Average number of missing incidents per looked after child who went missing 2016/17**
- Performance – Below average
- Note – Looked after children in Hertfordshire went missing on less occasions than the average for the Eastern Region



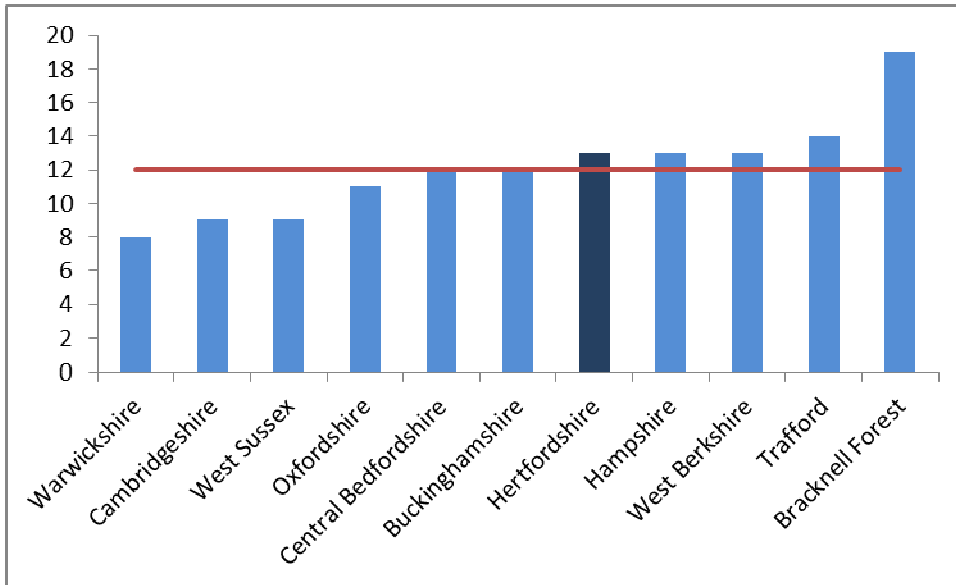**% Children who went missing more than once during the year 2016/17**
- Performance – Above regional average
- Note – 66% of CLA in Hertfordshire went missing on more than one occasion in the year in comparison with the regional average of 61%

**Percentage of CLA that had a missing incident during the year**
- Performance – Above average
- Note – The average for the statistical neighbours was 12%, Hertfordshire sat just slightly above this at 13%.



**Average number of missing incidents per looked after child who went missing 2016/17**
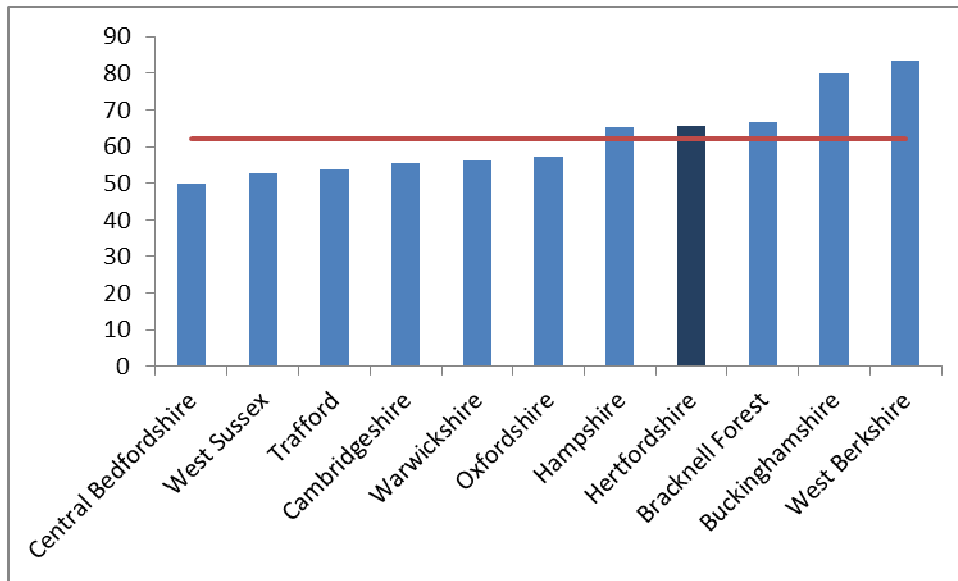
Performance – Above average
- Note – Very slightly above the statistical neighbour average at 5.1
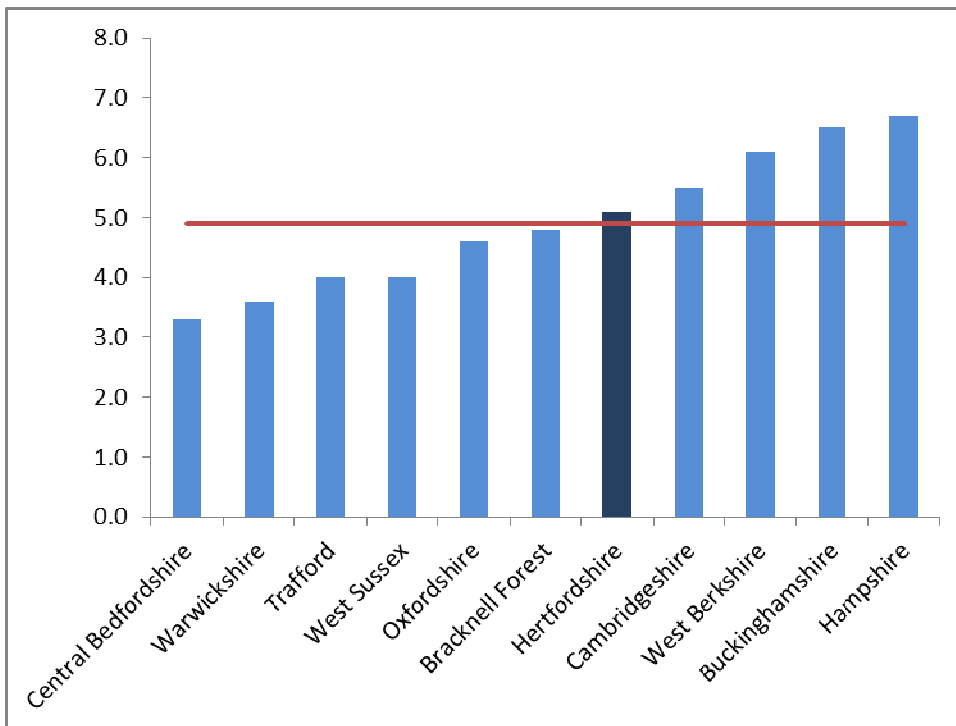


**% Children who went missing more than once during the year 2016/17**
- Performance – Above average

- Note – 66% of CLA in Hertfordshire went missing on more than one occasion in the year in comparison with the statistical neighbour average of 62%
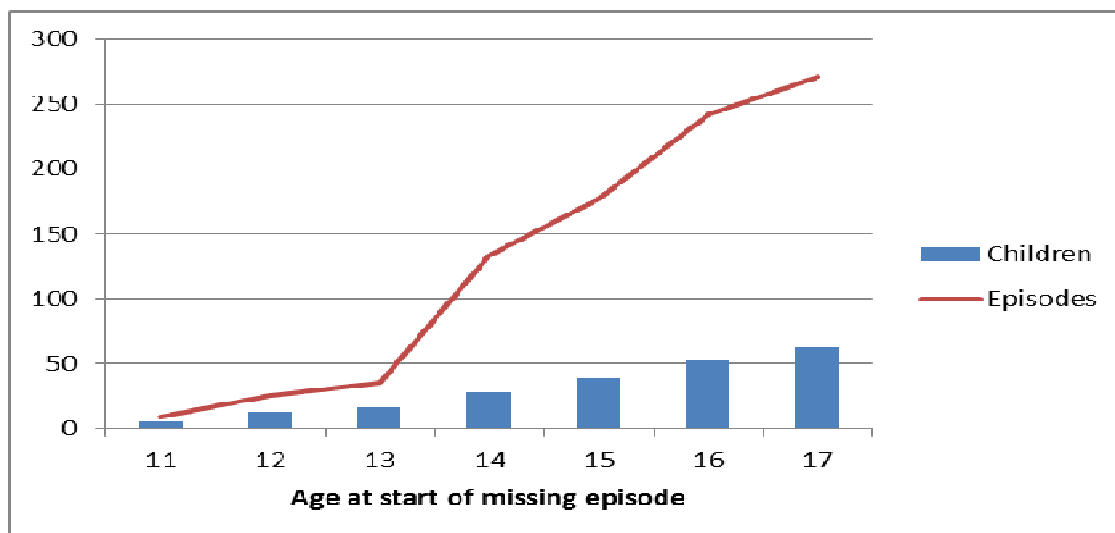


## 6. Children missing from care

In 2016/17 there was a decrease in the number of children in care that went missing. 176 children were recorded as missing, a 13% drop on the previous year (202). The number of episodes also decreased going from 986 to 899, a 9% drop from 2015/16.
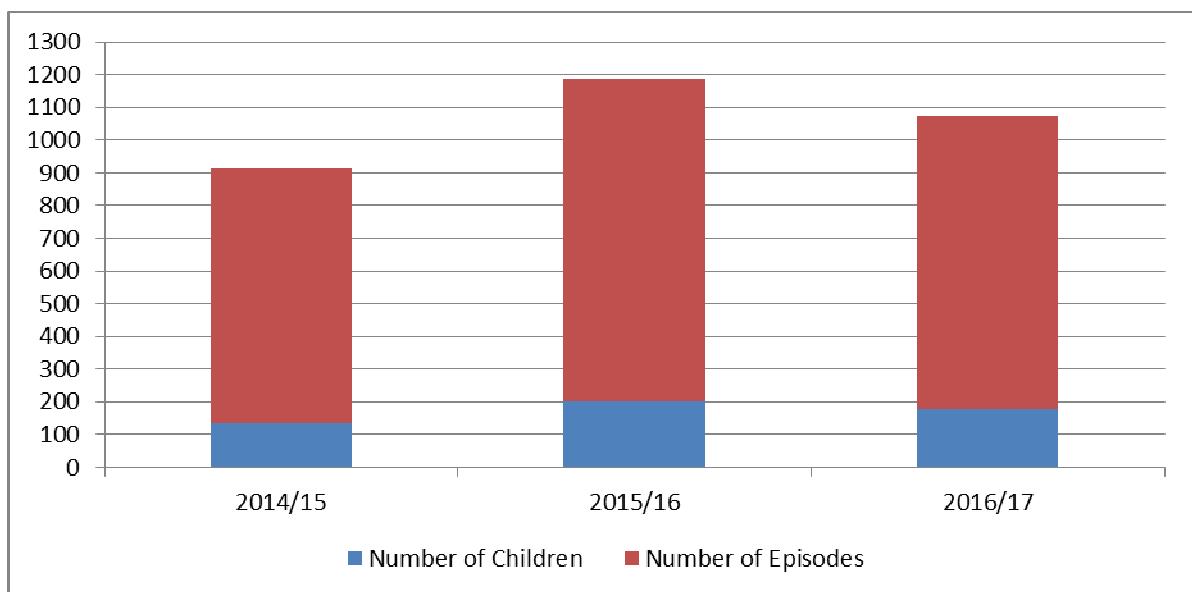


As in 2015/16, the highest proportion of children who went missing from care were aged 16/17. This age group accounted for 57.5% of the overall number of missing episodes. All of the other age groups saw a decrease in the number of children missing on 2015/16.

**Children missing from Care by Age  2016/17**



NB: Please note that some children may be included in two age groups due to having a missing episode either side of a birthday. Some children may also be included in both the CLA cohort and those missing from home if missing episodes occurred whilst at home and/or placed in care.

- 26 CLA went missing for more than 10 episodes. These young people accounted for 48% of all missing episodes.
- Young males accounted for 58% of the missing children in Hertfordshire. They also accounted for 63% of all CLA missing episodes.
- 72.9% of all those missing from care were identified as White British. This was almost identical to the figure for 2015-16 which was 72.8%. The figure for children missing from home was almost identical with 71.8% of all missing children identified as White British.
- In 2016/17 66.6% (599) of the missing episodes from care were for less than 24 hours. This was up from  60.1% in 2015/16
- 6.2% (56) of all missing episodes lasted for more than 5 days. We know that many young people went missing to visit family and friends. The majority of these episodes lasted for under 2 weeks (35). This was a reduction from 8% of episodes, last year.

**CLA Missing episodes > 5 days**
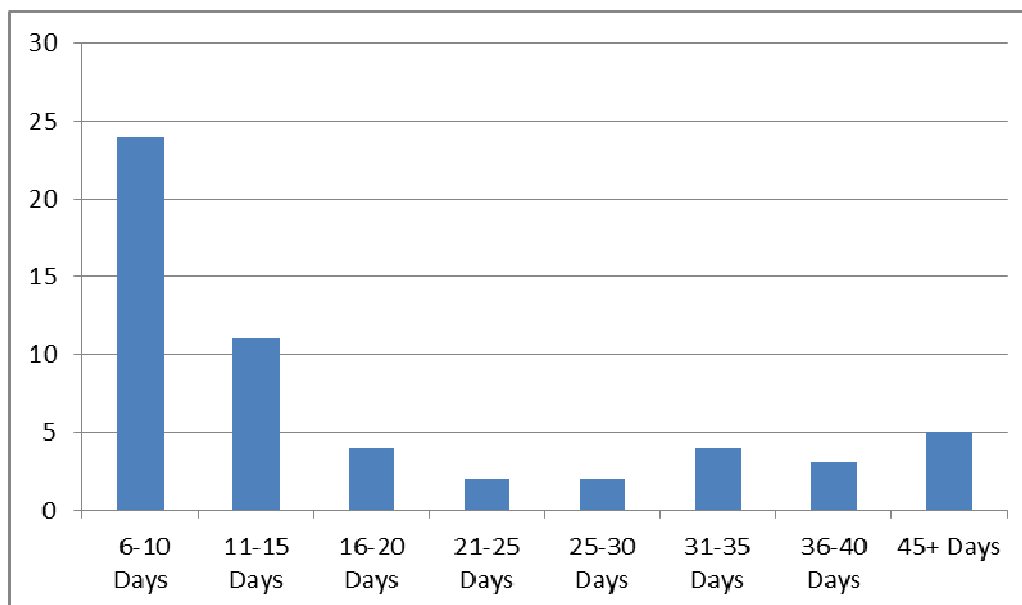
**Placement type**

During 2016/17, the majority of missing episodes were for children accommodated in Homes and Hostels and Independent living. These young people accounted for 64% of the young people in care that were recorded as missing in the year and for all 67% of all episodes of children missing from care. *Placement codes – Please see Appendix A*
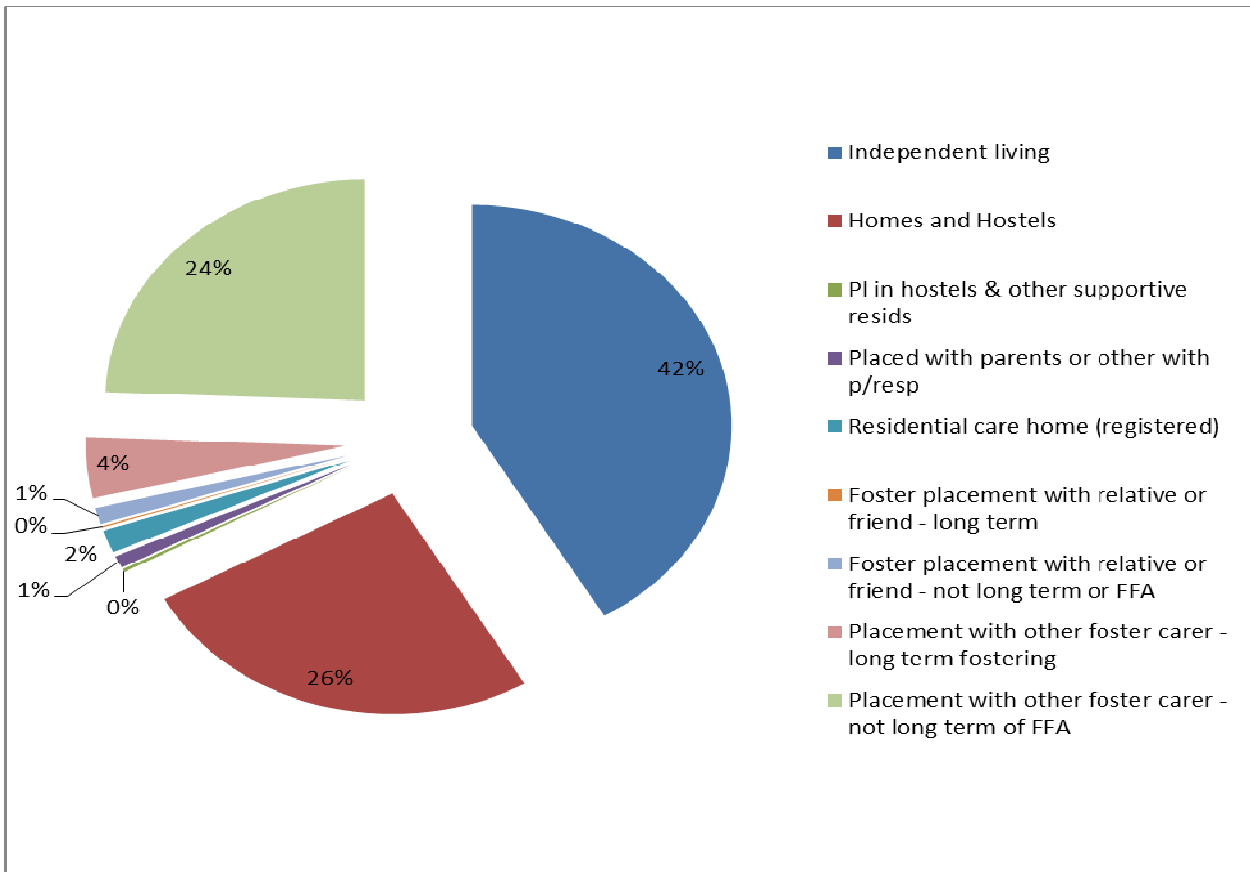


**Children's Residential Homes**

There were varying changes in the numbers of children and missing episodes at some residential homes. Children Services information confirmed the majority of these young people were not in the same placement as the previous year.

**Number of missing episodes – Children's Residential Homes**

When children go missing from their home, workers make every attempt to contact them by mobile phone, through their family or friends and by visiting locations they are known to visit. Workers will often follow a young person, for example on trains, if they refuse to return. Often young people are located with family members or boyfriend/girlfriend and returned to the home. Staff work closely with the Police to share information that may assist in locating a young person, to search premises or to track young people through their mobile phones.

Once found, a Police Officer will conduct a Safe and Well interview and Return home interviews are offered by care workers, social worker, Independent Review Officer as well as through the commissioned service for independent return home interviews as set out in paragraph 8 below, in an effort to secure maximum intelligence on where the young person has been and who they have been associating with.
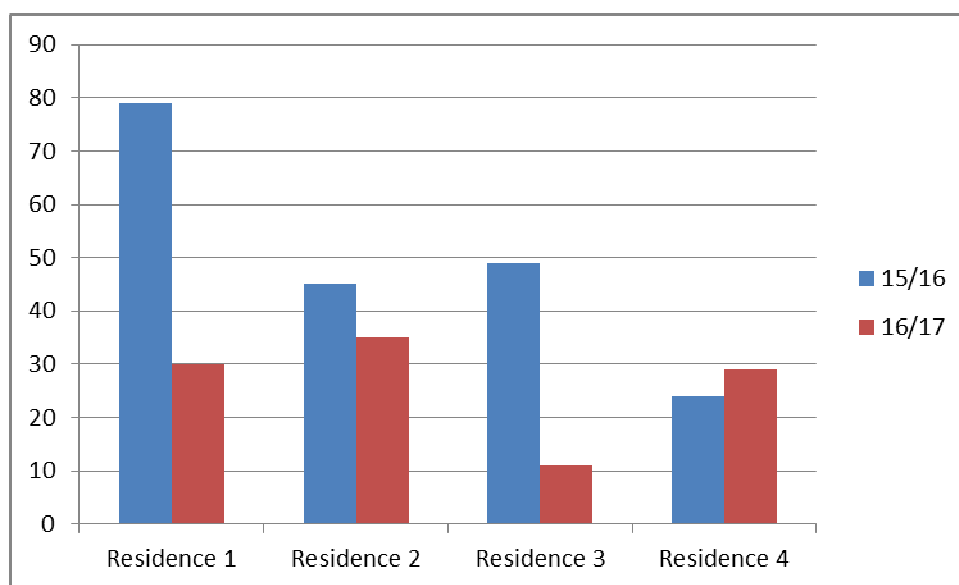


### Residence 1:  Stevenage
During 2016-17 there were **30** episodes of young people who went missing from Residence 1; this involved 6 young people.  This is a decrease of 62% on 2015-16.
- 97% of the missing episodes were under 24 hours.
- 6 children went missing from this placement.  Only one episode lasted for more than 24 hours.

### Residence 2: Baldock
During 2016-17 there were **35** episodes of young people who went missing from Residence 2; this is a decrease of 22% on the previous year.
- 89% of the missing episodes were under 24 hours.
- 7 children in this placement were missing during this period, a 75% increase on the previous year.

### Residence 3: Welwyn Garden City
During 2016-17 there were **11** episodes of young people who went missing from Residence 3; this involved 6 young people.  This is a decrease of 77% on 2015-16. The actual of number of children missing also decreased from 20 to 6 in 2016-17.
- 91% of the missing episodes were under 24 hours.

**Residence 4: Stevenage**

There was an increase in missing episodes during 2016-17. There were **29** episodes of young people who went missing from Residence 4;

- Six young people had a missing episode during their placement here. Two of these young people accounted for 25 of these episodes and played a significant role in influencing others to go missing at this time.
- 59% of the missing episodes were under 24 hours.

**Children Placed Out of County**

In 2016/17 there were 71 young people and 236 missing episodes recorded in total, a decrease on the 320 episodes in 2015-16. These 236 episodes account for 26% of all CLA missing CLA episodes in the year.

43% of the total missing episodes occurred from Homes and Hostels.

In 2016-17 Hertfordshire continued to improve capturing data for those who were placed out of county.

**Missing episodes (Children placed outside Hertfordshire)**
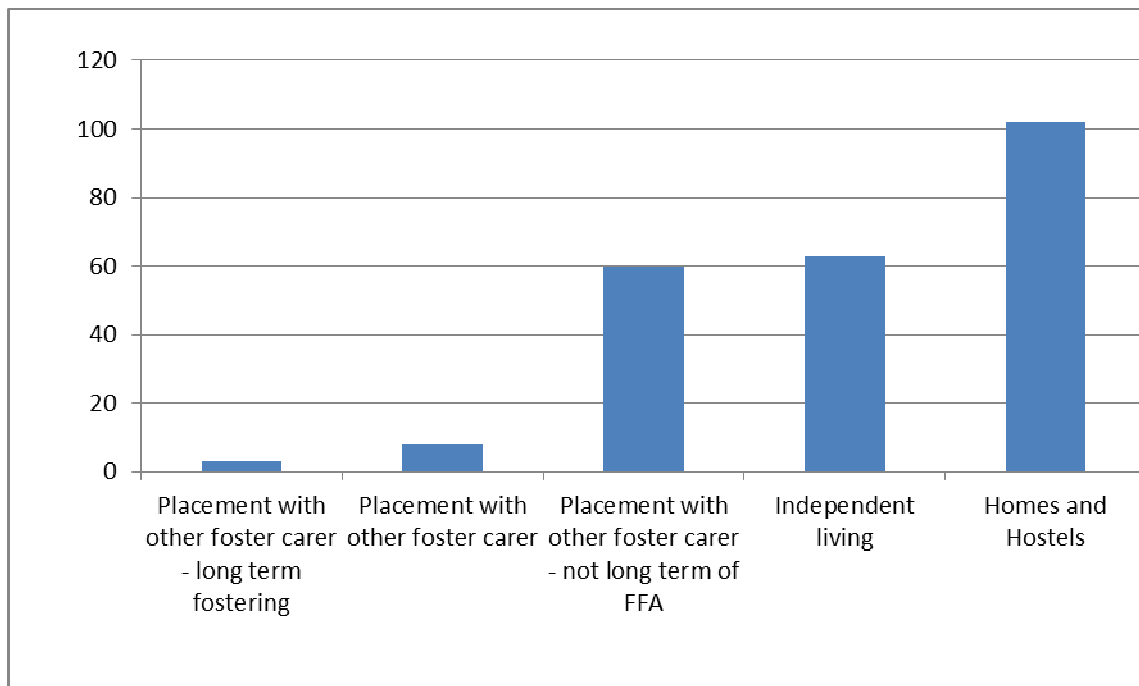


**7. CSE and SEARCH**

Sexual Exploitation and Runaway Children's (SEARCH) Panel is a multi-agency risk management and escalation panel.

The panel work collaboratively to ensure joint planning and decision making to develop a single multi agency risk management plan, and monitor its progress and impact to make a positive impact on children and young people who are missing and/or vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

SEARCH Panel is held once a month in which, cases presented will are reviewed at the following panel until discharged.

## Number of cases presented to SEARCH by concern
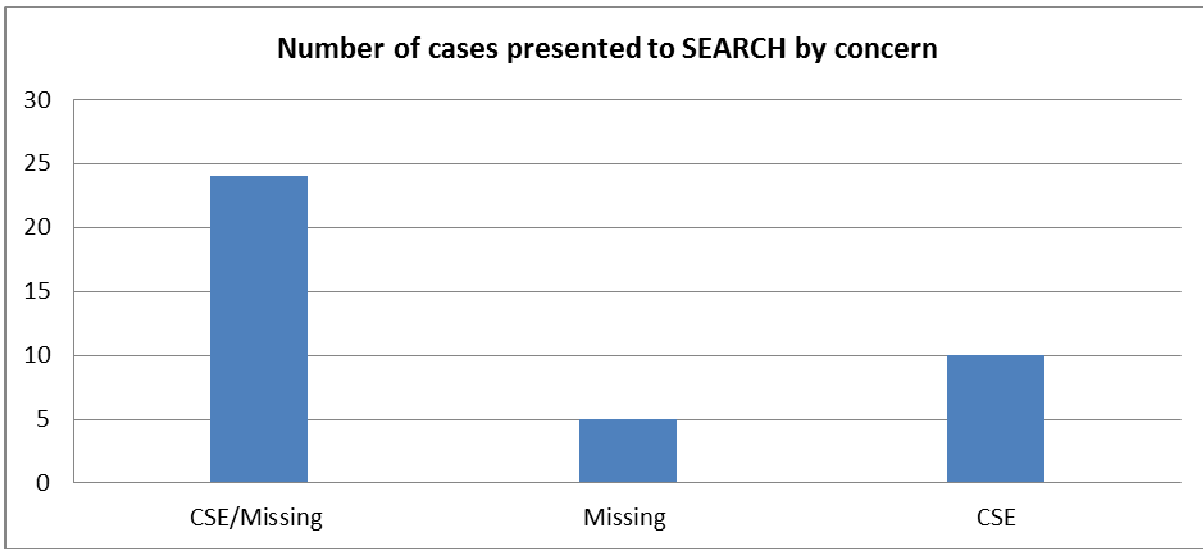


During 2016/2017, 39 cases were presented at SEARCH Panel of which 24 were referred due to concerns around both 'Missing and CSE', 10 due to concerns of 'CSE' and 5 due to concerns of 'Missing'. As per the previous year, the majority of the cases presented were due to risk of both CSE and Missing.

## Number of children known to SEARCH by Gender and CLA/Home
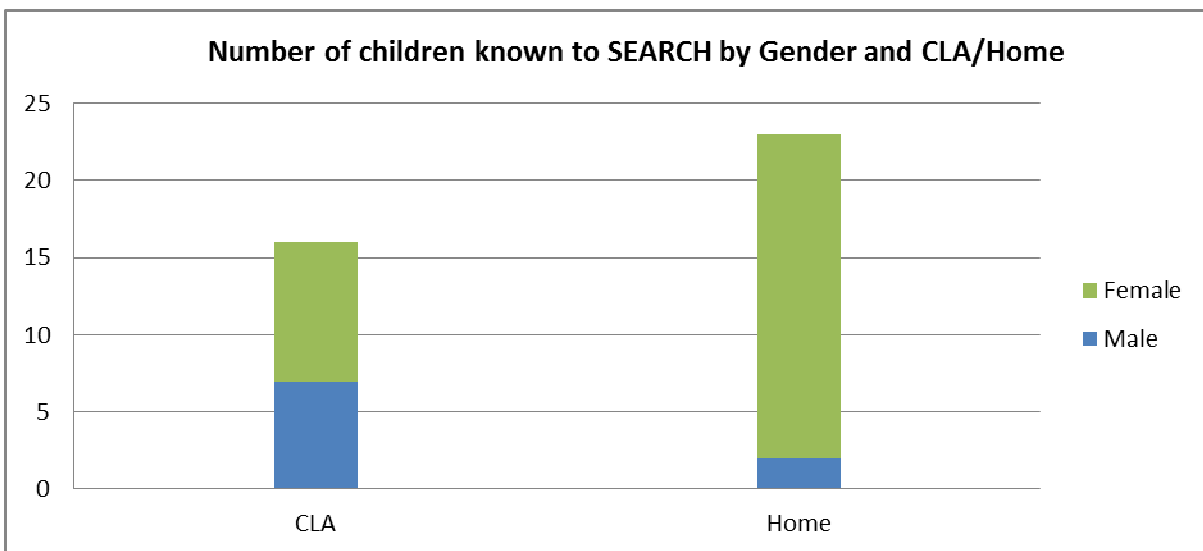


Of the 39 cases: 30 females presented, 21 were not accommodated by the Local Authority.  9 males presented; 7 were Children Looked After (CLA).   The total number of cases presented along with the total number of males and females was consistent with last year's figures, however in the previous year; all of the males were CLA.

Another local authority referred 2 cases to place their young person in Hertfordshire, both were female.

27 of the total 39 young people were residing in Hertfordshire whilst the remaining 12 were placed Out of County.

## SEARCH Panel Outcomes
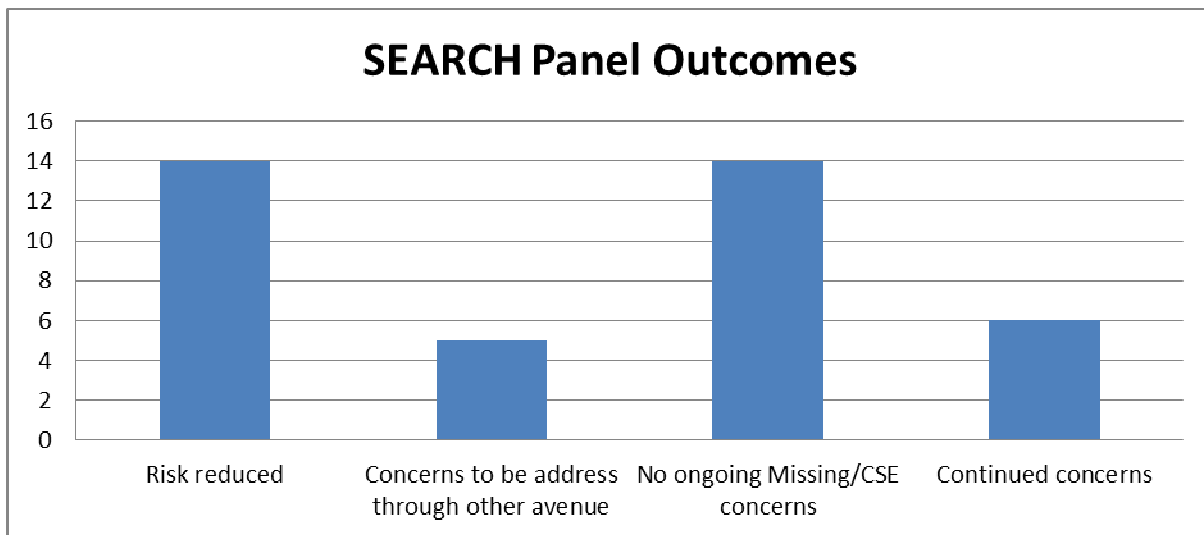


Of the 39 cases presented at SEARCH Panel, 14 were discharged due to 'Reduced Risk' and 14 were discharged due to 'No ongoing Missing/CSE concerns'.

5 cases were discharged from SEARCH Panel with recommendations for the concerns to be addressed through another avenue whilst 6 cases were re-called to SEARCH Panel for a full case presentation by the case-worker due to the 'Continued Concerns'.

**8. Return Home Interviews**
**(Missing People Hertfordshire Return Home Interview Service Impact Report July 2017)**

Hertfordshire County Council and the Hertfordshire office of the Police and Crime Commissioner commissioned Missing People to provide a Return Home Interview Service and 1-1 Support to children and young people across Hertfordshire initially from 22nd July 2016 to 31st March 2017. The contract period was a pilot designed to offer Hertfordshire children and young people:-

- 700 Return Home Interviews
- 100% of children offered follow-up support
- 30 children p/a offered intensive 1-1 support per year
- 100% of parents and carers offered our 24/7 Family Support service
- Data and analysis regarding trends and patterns
- 24 hour phone, text and email support for children, parents and carers

**System Review –**

At the end of the first contract period (July 2016 to March 2017) meetings and reviews were held with MASH, the Missing Person's Unit and Missing People. This was to resolve issues that had arisen and to ensure the operational systems were effective. As a result the Top 10 list was agreed, whereby the 10 most vulnerable children and young people with ongoing missing episodes would remain on the referral list for Missing People to undertake every RHI for a 3 month period and provide a 1:1 support service. There would be a further 6 referrals made each week to be decided by the triage service between HCC MASH and the Missing Person's Unit. Feedback from both MASH and the MPU has been positive, that this new system is more time effective for both teams.

Volumes for referrals were agreed for the new annual contract period at 840 for 12 months. This equates to an average of 16 RHI's offered per week.

HCC Young Commissioners have been tasked with obtaining independent feedback from Children and Young People that have received a service from Missing People. They have devised a feedback form which has been sent in the last week to those that have been on the 'Top Ten' list initially and will also be sent to a sample of those that engaged with the service. The aim of the exercise is to capture the Voice of the Child independently. Responses will be shared.

**Data -**

We have been able to combine the data collected by Missing People with the HCC Dashboard data for 2016/2017 to compare the service with in-house, yet some of the information is missing for the in-house service for the first financial year the service covered. This has been followed up with both MASH and the Analytical & Information Services Team to obtain the missing data.

In addition to the commissioned service, return home interviews are offered to all young people following a missing episode, by Targeted Youth Support, Children's Case Workers, Care worker in a residential setting and Independent Review Officers.

There have been some recording issues over this period which are being addressed, so the data below relating to these in house RHI is not comprehensive

| No | Indicator | Q2 HCC | Q2 MP | Q3 HCC | Q3 MP | Q4 HCC | Q4* MP |
|----|-----------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|--------|
| 1 | Total number of missing children (referred from Home and Care) | 354 | 136 | 408 | 128 | 382 | 162 |
| 2 | Total number of missing episodes (referred from Home and Care) | 500 | 182 | 567 | 218 | 548 | 285 |
| | RHI – Number offered (episodes) | | 122 | | 141 | | 159 |
| | RHI - % offered (episodes) | | 67% | | 64% | | 55% |
| | RHI – Number accepted (episodes)** | | 82 | | 81 | | 71 |
| | RHI - % accepted (episodes)** | | 45% | | 37% | | 25% |
| **Missing from Home** | | | | | | | |
| 5 | Missing Children from Home (referred) | 229 | 112 | 288 | 112 | 265 | 149 |
| 6 | Missing Episodes from Home (referred) | 285 | 123 | 345 | 137 | 335 | 200 |
| 14b | RHI - Number offered episodes | | 80 | | 100 | | 131 |
| 14c | RHI - % offered (episodes) | | 65% | | 72% | | 66% |
| 14d | RHI– Number accepted (episodes)** | | 54 | | 54 | | 49 |
| 14e | RHI - % accepted (episodes) ** | | 43% | | 40% | | 25% |
| **Missing from Care** | | | | | | | |
| 15 | Missing Children from Care (referred) | 125 | 37 | 121 | 40 | 119 | 41 |
| 16 | Missing Episodes from Care (referred) | 215 | 60 | 222 | 81 | 213 | 85 |
| 22b | RHI - Number offered (episodes) | | 48 | | 70 | | 71 |
| 22c | RHI - % offered (episodes) | | 80% | | 86% | | 83% |
| 22d | RHI – Number accepted (episodes) ** | | 26 | | 25 | | 22 |
| 22e | RHI - % accepted (episodes) ** | | 43% | | 31% | | 25% |

Work is underway to improve the process of recording outcomes of missing episodes on LCS.

**Appendix A**

| | |
|---|---|
| Independent Living | Independent living like in a flat, lodgings, bedsit, B&B or with friends, with or without formal support |
| Homes and Hostels | Children's Homes subject to Children's Homes regulations |
| Pl in hostels & other supportive residential | Semi-independent living accommodation not subject to Children's Homes regulations |
| Placed with parents or other with p/responsibility | Placed with own parents or other person with parental responsibility |
| Placement with other foster carer | Foster placement with other foster carer-not long term or FFA/concurrent planning |
| Residential care home (registered) | Residential Care Home |
| Foster placement with relative or friend - long term | Foster placement with relative or friend-long term fostering |
| Foster placement with relative or friend - not long term or FFA | Fostering placement with relative or friend who is not long-term or FFA/concurrent planning |
| Placement with other foster carer - long term fostering | Foster placement with other foster carer-long term fostering |
| | |
| *Definition of placement codes DFE SSDA903 Guidance* | |