

**Title**                      **Family Group Homes**

**Category**                **Organisational Support.**

**Force**                      **Avon and Somerset Constabulary**

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# POP Competition 2002

## **Family Group Homes – Southmead Sector**

### **Summary**

In 1999 there were three Family Group Homes on the North Bristol District. These are small units operated by Social Services who provide supervised accommodation for young people in groups of up to 6 tenants. During 1999 the three units reported residents missing on 225 separate occasions, and in each case the matter was investigated by police creating a heavy police demand on time and resources.

Initial research examined the call profile of all the Homes in Bristol, and all three North Bristol Homes featured very highly in terms of police demand. Subsequent analysis examined the timing of calls, seasonality, the type of calls and which residents or employees were subject of the calls. A partnership meeting between the three Bristol Police Districts and Social Services provided a consultation forum and acted as a springboard for the responses to be developed.

An early response to the problem was to improve liaison with the Homes. The Beat Managers covering the relevant geographical areas were tasked with attending staff meetings and to ensure that the Homes were regularly visited.

Analysis on missing person reports revealed unethical and inappropriate reporting by the Homes, so a new reporting protocol was agreed which re defined the term 'missing person' and demanded that only those residents who's absence was unusual should be reported. Social Services staff would be required to undertake all normal enquiries as would be expected of any parent. Further negotiations developed and agreement was reached that only emergency cases would be routinely reported to the police, otherwise, matters would be reported to the Beat Manager on the next visit. We also agreed that certain minor incidents should not be investigated by police but dealt with as an internal matter.

As a result of this initiative the number of missing person reports received from the Homes on the District reduced from 225 in 1999 to 105 in 2000 and just 31 in 2001. This equates to an 86% reduction. The total number of missing persons reported on the District has also subsequently reduced from 500 in 1999 to 428 in 2000, and 270 in 2001. A 46% reduction. The number of incidents reported by the Homes has reduced from 356 in 2000 to 307 in 2001, a 14% reduction, and 999 calls have reduced from 82 in 2000 to 62 in 2001, a 24% reduction.

## Description of the Project.

In late December 1999 it became apparent that Family Group Homes on North Bristol District regularly featured in our 'top ten' of repeat callers. The Homes, operated by Bristol Social Services provide supervised accommodation for young people, who are unable to live at home. The bulk of calls centred around the reporting of missing persons, with regular reports of disorder and minor criminal offences. Against a back drop of ever increasing demands on the police, there was a need to address some of these persistent callers and explore ways of reducing unnecessary demand.

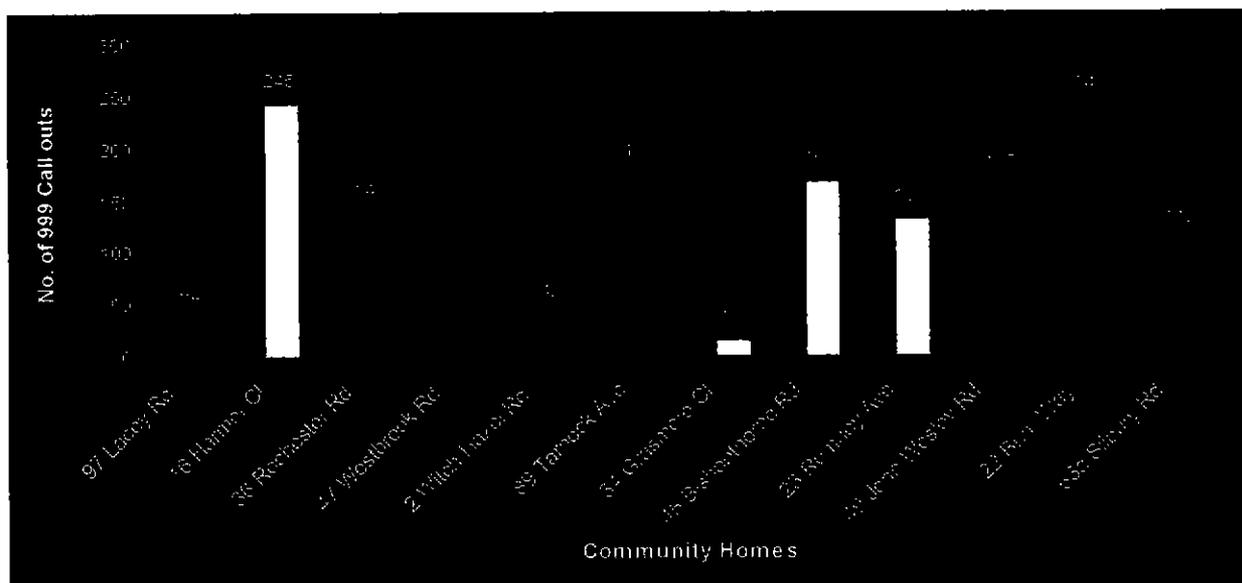
### Objectives

1. To Reduce Unnecessary Demand for the Police Service.
2. To Improve Handling and Reporting of Missing Persons from the Homes.
3. To Improve Liaison Between Social Services and the Police.
  - Closer partnership working.
  - To improve information exchange between partners.

### Analysis of the problem

Early in 2000 representatives of the three Bristol Police Districts met with the head of the Bristol Children's Homes together with the Social Services area managers who had responsibility for the individual homes. The meeting was called to discuss the alarming statistic that the twelve Bristol homes had made 1,492 emergency 999 calls to the Police in 1999. This meeting provided a valuable consultation opportunity and acted a spring board for the development of problem solving initiatives.

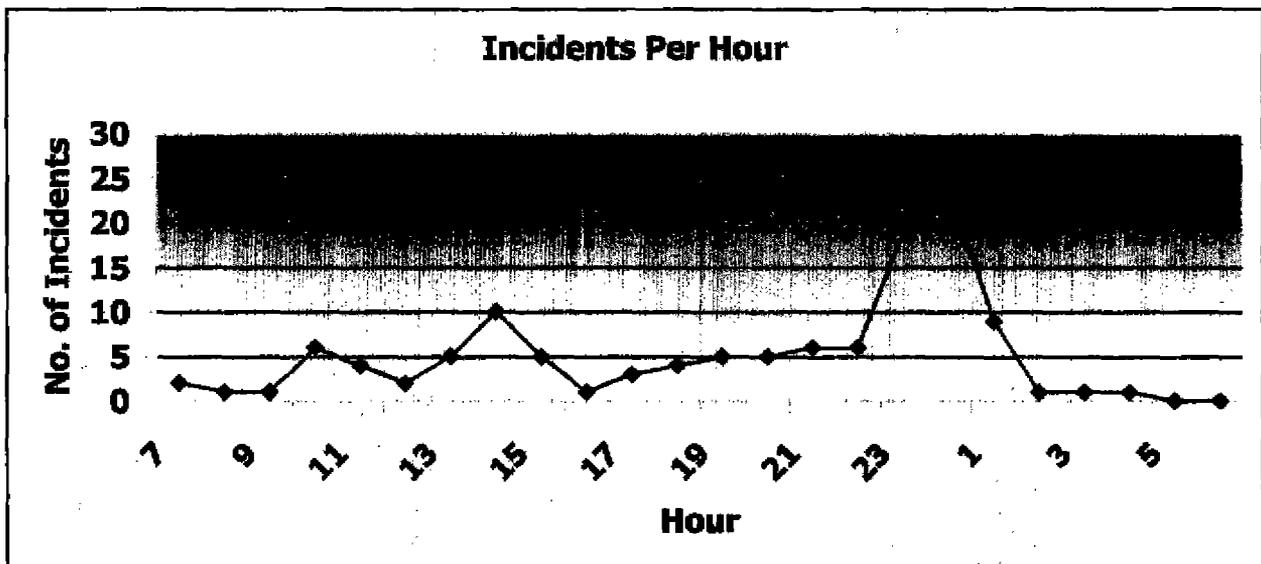
#### **999 calls to Bristol Family Group Homes from 01/02/99 – 31/01/00**



The initial research on Southmead Sector was based on analysing the calls to the four homes located on the sector, situated at 16 Harmer Close, 34 Grasmere Close, 45 Bishopthorpe Road and 23 Romney Avenue, of which there were 565 during 1999. (See appendix A)

Chronological analysis of calls from the Southmead Sector homes, identified that peak demand occurred on or around midnight which corresponded to the Social Services policy regarding the cut off time for reporting absent residents to the Police. At this stage the only option for the Police was to record the resident as a missing person which led to formal reporting and an investigation. It also became clear that in the majority of cases the Home staff did not make any enquiries themselves, and they were only reporting to comply with Social Services policy. It had also become common practice for the home's to complete their own missing person forms, and fax them to the police station to 'save' police time, and prevent unnecessary calls in the early hours of the morning causing disturbance to other residents.

**Timing of incidents at Family Group Home, 45 Bishopthorpe Road.**



In the bulk of cases the absence was part of the normal pattern of behaviour for the individuals who usually returned of their own accord within 72 hours. In one example the absent resident was in possession of a mobile phone, and when police arrived to record the missing person report they were surprised to discover that the staff member hadn't even tried to phone her. When asked to do so, the resident answered and the matter was instantly resolved.

Resident analysis provided information on which residents were the subject of calls and the nature of the calls. Particular residents were highlighted as problems which provided a real focus for negotiation on specific cases.

As well as examining resident behaviour we also analysed staff behaviour, and we were able to identify one particular staff member who disproportionately called the police, with anecdotal evidence from residents and police officers describing him as being part of the problem.

As the analysis continued it became apparent that the culture of some staff working within the homes was geared towards reporting everything to the police, and using police officers to reinforce discipline against residents. In one example a resident threw her breakfast bowl on the floor in a fit of temper causing it to smash. This was reported to the police as criminal damage. In another example police were called to one of homes to tell the residents to go to bed.

## **Responses**

### **1. To Reduce Unnecessary Demand for the Police Service**

- With the support of one of the area managers simple terms were agreed to reduce the heavy demand on police time.
- No criminal damage below the value of £60 would be routinely reported to the police.
- Minor assaults against staff or other residents would not be routinely reported to the police but dealt with as an internal discipline matter.
- All non urgent calls will not be routinely reported to the police immediately but will be reported to the **Beat** Manager directly.
- Local Beat Managers would regularly attend staff meetings at the Homes, and ensure regular availability to record non urgent matters.
- Arrests for minor disorder will only be made at the request of staff if supported by a prosecution statement. This was to prevent cool off arrest being made.

### **2. To Improve Handling and Reporting of Missing Persons from the Homes**

Through negotiations with one of the area managers, a new protocol was devised to improve the processes of reporting missing persons. An early breakthrough was recognising the difference between the Social Services term 'absent without authority', and the police term 'missing person'. The new protocol was approved at Force level through Detective Sergeant Gareth Bevan, and piloted in the summer of 2000.

The protocol terms

- If a resident was absent without authority, but their absence was part of their normal pattern of behaviour, they would not be regarded as missing persons.
- To comply with Social Services procedure all absence without authority should be reported to the police who would record it on a 420 report, or as a grade 5 call card, with no further action required.

- Should any absence be beyond normal behaviour, or cause concerns for any other reason, it should be reported as missing person.
- Before reporting a missing person home staff would be expected to complete all telephone enquires before reporting to police, and if two or more *staff* were on duty they would be expected to complete checks of know locations frequented.
- When these agreed terms have been complied with police will undertake a full missing person enquiry.

### **3. To Improve Liaison Between Social Services and the Police.**

Research and anecdotal evidence from police and Social Services information indicated that one staff member placed the greatest demand on police resources, and was, on many occasions the victim of crime himself. This had been the case at two homes where he had worked on the district 16 Harmer Close, and 23 Romney Avenue. Working closely with one of the area managers, combined efforts were made to curb the disruptive behaviour of this staff member without success. By carefully recording evidence the staff member was moved, against his will, to a less confrontational post.

One resident was regularly reported as missing, and on each occasion he was located, returned home and subsequently went missing again. Although young, he preferred to stay with a male suspected of being homosexual. On no occasion did the resident make any allegations against him, and he wasn't in compulsory care. Because of his age the police had no powers to remove the resident from the address where he was staying. Again, with negotiation, the resident was released from Social Services care and allowed to live as he wished.

In 2001 a particularly disruptive resident was placed in one of the homes. Within a short time she was regularly being arrested for criminal damage, assault and disorder. After a series of arrests she was remanded in *custody* by the court, but because of a lack of secure beds she was returned to the home. She continued to offend and over a three week period was arrested every day and kept in police custody every night. Working with Social Services, and the Health Service a joint application was made for a civil secure place, so the individual could be treated for her behaviour. The application was successful and the-resident has now **moved** away from Bristol to a secure unit.

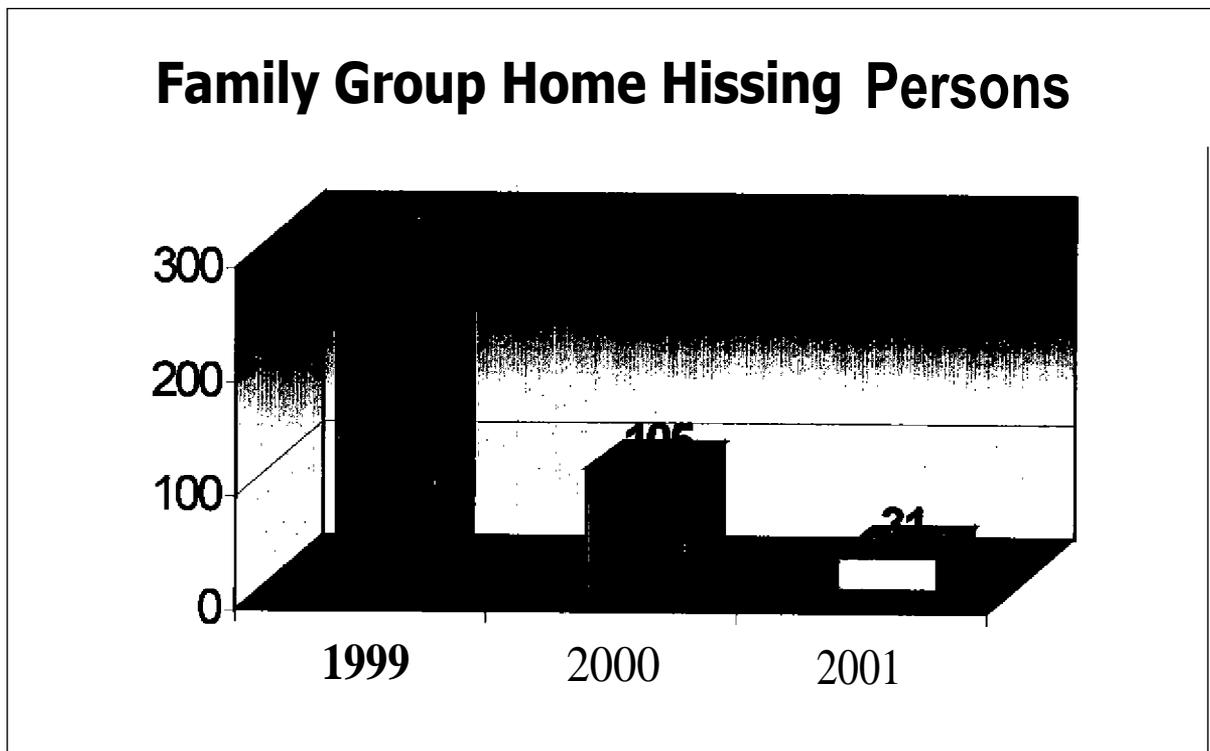
### **Assessment**

Since the start of this project 16 Harmer Close has been closed down. This resulted, in part, from a major restructuring programme within Social Services, but was assisted by the close analysis of problems within the home, and the identification of staff and management weaknesses.

34 Grasmere Close is a former residential children's home which is now only used for short term over spill, or for young people who need intensive supervision, and

cannot share with other children. Demand here is so light it has not been included in this initiative.

Demand figures have been monitored from January 1999 to December 2001 and over that period the number of residents reported missing from Family Group Homes has reduced from 225 in 1999 to just 31 in 2001. This equates to a reduction of 86% in two years. If we assume that each missing person investigation would take a minimum of 2 hours to complete, this reduction equates to a saving of 49 working days for one police officer, or a saving of £6,860. The below chart shows the staggering reduction in reports over the 3 year monitoring period.

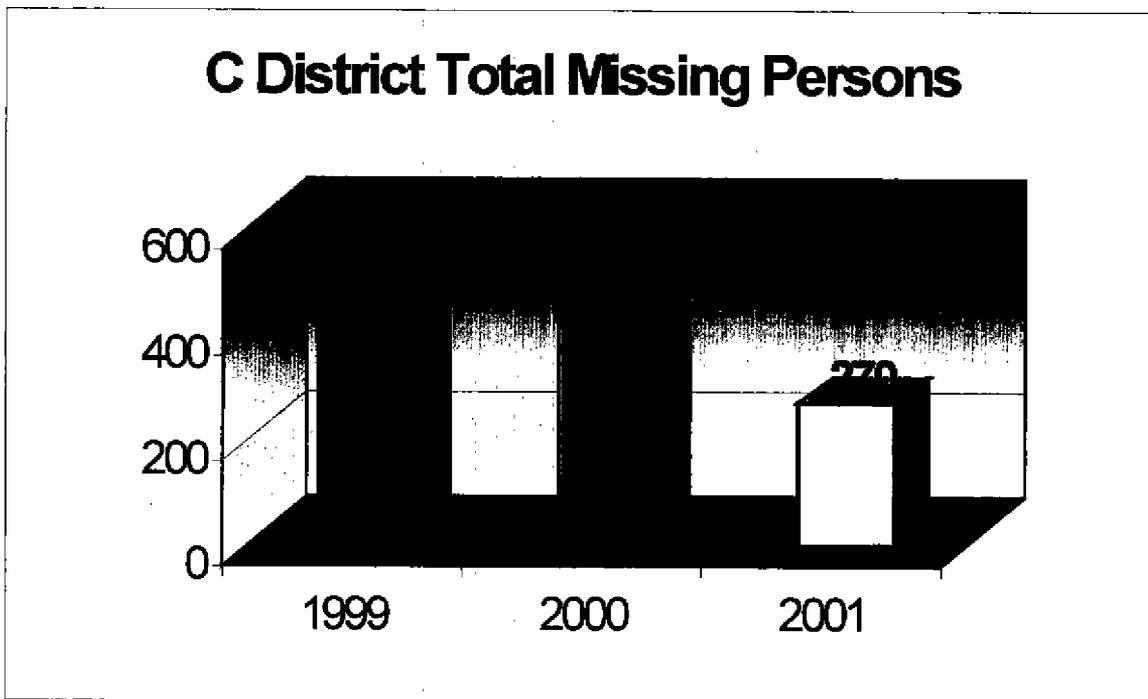


The number of monthly missing reports from C District Family Group Homes are as follows.

	FGH 1999	FGH 2000	FGH 2001
<b>JAN</b>	11	25	1
<b>FEB</b>	12	9	6
<b>MAR</b>	16	12	2
<b>APR</b>	26	13	2
<b>MAY</b>	11	4	5
<b>JUN</b>	13	23	6
<b>JUL</b>	21	8	6
<b>AUG</b>	16	3	0
<b>SEPT</b>	29	1	2
<b>OCT</b>	38	3	1
<b>NOV</b>	13	0	0
<b>'DEC.</b>	19	2	0

The number of missing person enquiries generated by Family Group Homes has a significant impact on the total number of such enquires for the whole of North Bristol District. Over the same three year period the total number of reports has reduced from 500 in 1999 to 270 in 2001. This equates to a reduction of 46%.

The below chart demonstrates the effect of this project on the total number of missing persons reported on C District.

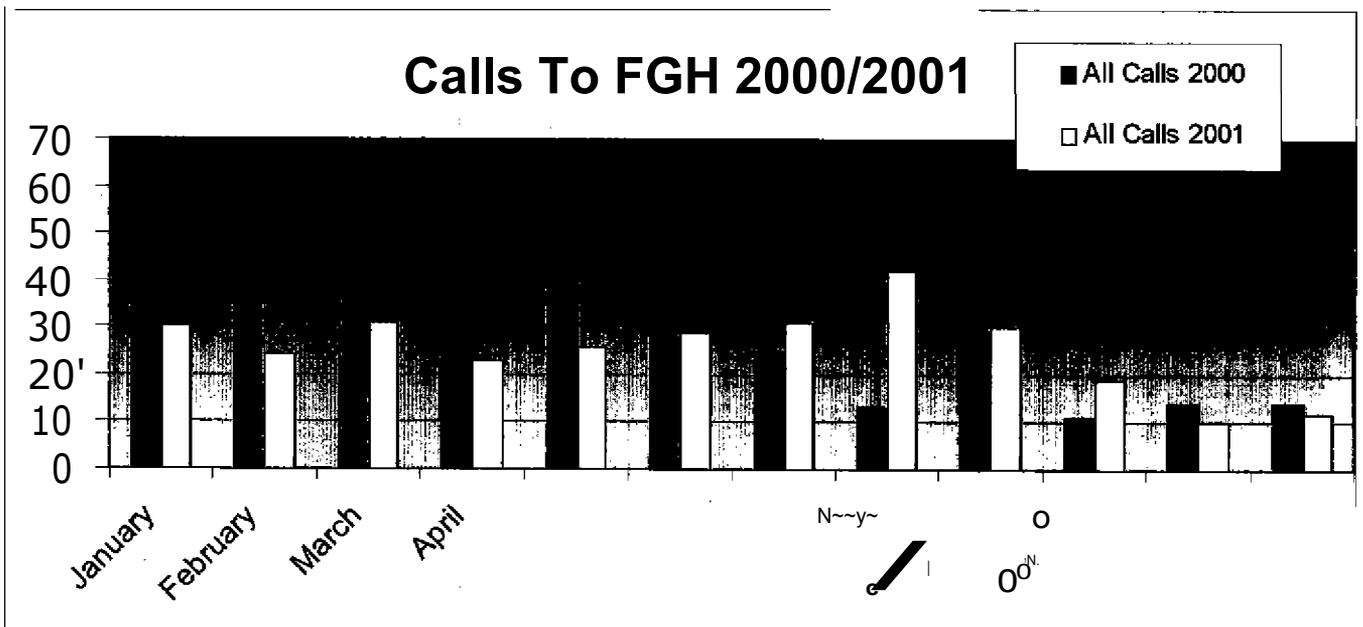


The table below shows the total numbers of missing persons reported on C District over the 3 year monitoring period.

	1999	2000	2001	1999 cumulative	2000 cumulative	2001 cumulative
Jan	25	51	11	25	51	11
Feb	21	29	21	46	80	32
Mar	34	32	20	80	112	52
Apr	48	33	23	128	145	75
May	30	44	35	158	189	110
Jun	33	56	37	191	245	147
Jul	43	42	40	234	287	187
Aug	40	34	17	274	323	204
Sep	49	33	26	323	356	230
Oct	72	20	14	395	376	244
Nov	63	26	16	458	402	260
Dec	42	26	10	500	428	270

The efforts to reduce police demand in areas outside missing person reports commenced in late 2000, and subsequently data has been collected from January 2000 to December 2001. As residents absent without authority are still reported to the police, the improvements in missing person reporting is not reflected in these figures. However, the number of incidents reported to the police has reduced from 356 in 2000, to 307 in 2001, a reduction of 14%. 999 calls have also reduced from 82 in 2000 to 62 in 2001, a reduction of 24%. The problems created by the problem resident at 45 Bishopthorpe Road in Autumn 2001 has considerably affected these figures between July and October 2001, otherwise a continued reduction would have been anticipated.

**All calls to Family Group Homes on North Bristol District.**



As a result of this initiative the Avon and Somerset Constabulary policy regarding missing persons has been amended to accommodate locally agreed protocols with Local Authority Family Group Homes.

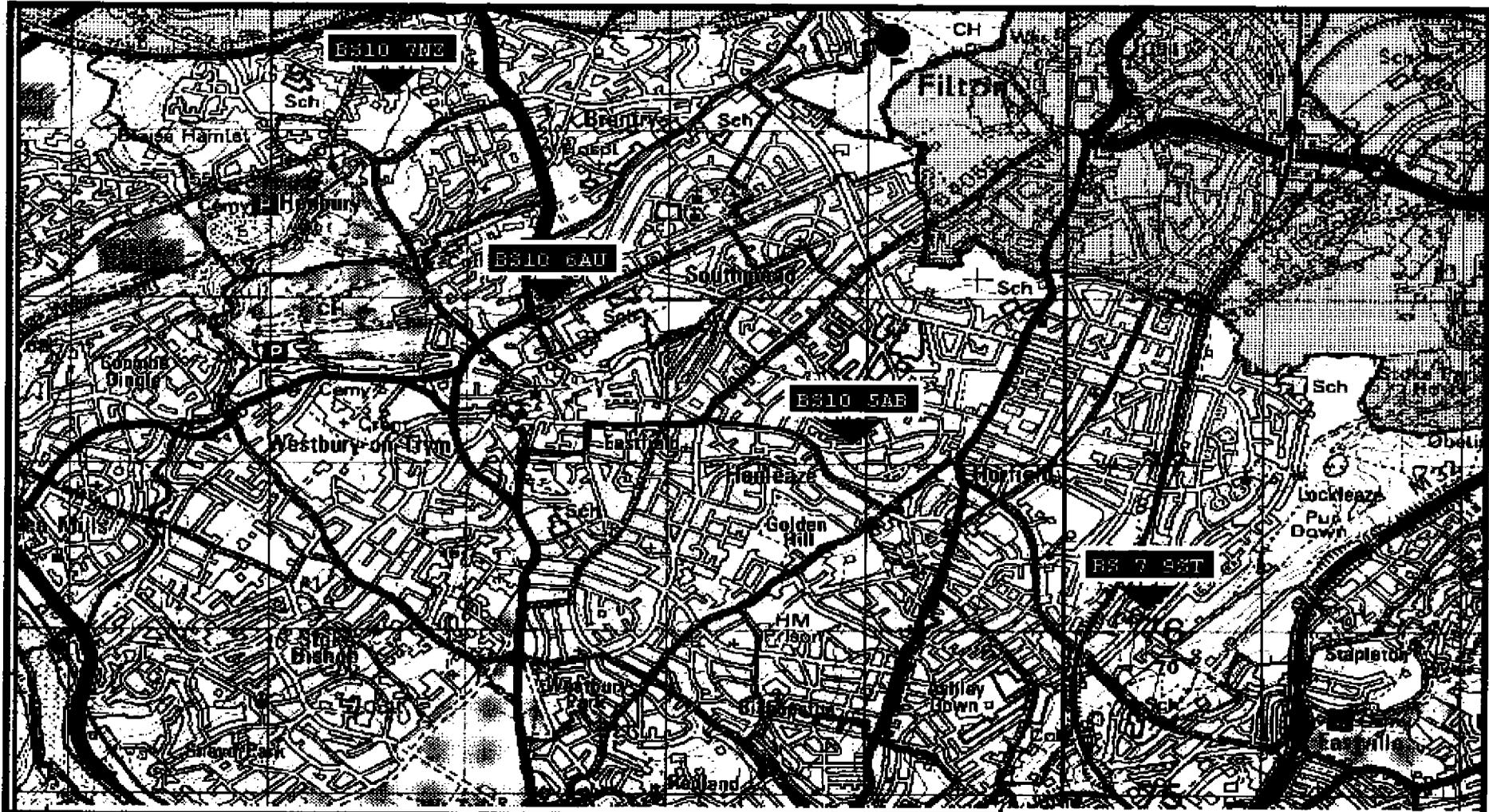
Policy 52QP-1040-02

**1.14.1** *Some children who are in the care of the local authority in family group homes or foster care or in private care homes will absent themselves at some time or another. These absences will, for certain children, be on a frequent basis, and will result in a large volume of calls to the Police and a demand on resources.....*

**1.14.2** *In a great many cases the child would more accurately be described as being absent without authority rather than a missing person .....*

**1.14.3**..... *Districts will need to work closely with carers, both private and Social Services, in establishing risk assessments in individual cases and in conducting investigations into the missing episode. Accordingly, nothing in this policy prevents districts working to locally agreed protocols in dealing with reports of children who are reported absent without authority'.*

## Appendix A : Location of Homes



<b>BS10 7NZ =</b>	<b>16 Harmer Close</b>
<b>BS10 6AU =</b>	<b>34 Grasmere Close</b>
<b>BS10 5AB =</b>	<b>45 Bishopthorpe Road</b>
<b>BS7 9ST =</b>	<b>23 Romney Avenue</b>



# SARA I ACTION PLAN

<b>District</b>	<b>C</b>
<b>Sector</b>	<b>S</b>

**Ref No:** CSI 100

**Title of Problem:** High resource demand from Family Group Homes

**Lead Officer:** Insp Mark JACKSON

**Collar No:** 2823

**Unit:** CS

**Objective of SARA I Action Plan:**

To reduce call demand from FGH's without reducing quality of service and a speedy response to genuine calls.

NB. A problem for the purposes of POP is defined as:

°A group of incidents occurring in a community that are similar or connected in one or more ways and that are of concern to the public and require a police response.°

**SCANNING:** Overview of problem - which individuals and agencies are affected and how, what evidence of the problem is available?

In 1999 the 3 FGH's on C District were responsible for 547 999 calls.

In the same period they also made 225 missing person reports and in the majority of cases the residents returned of their own accord within 48 hours.

Social Services definition of missing is completely different from police definition.

High demand has caused a poor relationship between FGH staff and police officers. Poor attitudes from both sides has caused unnecessary friction and complaints.

**THE SARA CYCLE**

Identifying the problems by reviewing a wide range of data and information sources and applying basic knowledge and Met



Reviewing the problem to assess whether or not the solution was successful and to take note of any lessons learned from the process

Using knowledge and skill, research and IT to identify common characteristics and underlying causes with respect to the problem identified

THE PROBLEM



Developing suitable actions to address the problem and its causes, bringing in colleagues from other internal departments and/or external agencies to assist where appropriate

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**ANALYSIS:** What is the cause of the problem? How can you solve it?  
(for Problem Orientated Policing Think: Victim — Offender — Location)

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The peak demand for police resources is at midnight. This coincides with the failed return time for residents and the wish to go to bed for care workers. Police response is to commence a misper report.

The bulk of reports apart from missing persons are minor disorder, criminal damage, and minor assaults. In most cases criminal damage is of low value.

When missing persons are reported it is out of duty rather than particular concern, and generally speaking little or no enquiries to locate the misper have been taken by home staff. The majority of enquiry information is provided by the home itself.

Peak problems occur when antagonistic residents or members of staff are together. The removal of one factor seems to reduce incidents considerably.

There is a need to recognise the difference between absent residents and mispers, and implement a system of dealing with both to satisfy the requirements of both agencies.

There is a need to identify poor service by either agency and identify through managerial channels.

Minor incidents which are reasonably expected in this difficult environment need to be dealt with through skilled management rather than the criminal justice system.

Regular liaison between the homes and police is needed to identify potential difficulties before they arise and negotiate their resolution.

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**RESPONSE** Summary of proposed action - Consider personnel, equipment, partnerships, specialist departments.

When will the action take place?	What is the action planned?	Who will be involved?
March 2000	Collate evidence of poor service at 16 Harmer Close and call meeting with head of Children's Services Christine TELLER	A B C District. 1 Head Of SS Children's Services. Area Home Managers.
Summer 2000	Beat Manager Liz KEOGH start attending Unit meetings at 45 Bishopthorpe Road.	1 Beat Manager Unit Staff
August 2000	Introduce new misper reporting protocol with 45 Bishopthorpe Road. Liaison meeting with area manager to discuss formalisation of misper protocol, and agree terms for staff investigation responsibility and the management of minor incidents.	Area Manager Valerie WILLIAMS Insp JACKSON Liz KEOGH
October 2000	New protocols formally agreed and implemented and approved by HQ CID as complying with force policy.	Valerie WILLIAMS Insp Mark JACKSON DS Gareth BEVAN
January 2001	Takeover Romney Avenue FGH establish similar agreement. PC NEWNHAM attends regular meetings, and all non urgent matters reported through him.	Valerie WILLIAMS Insp Mark JACKSON John NEWNHAM

How will the results be measured?

Reduction in 999 calls  
Reduction in Misper reports  
General decrease in demand  
Better relationship between Social Services staff and police.

Date Response agreed:

Monitoring dates:

Agreed by:

/ I

**HOW DOES THIS CONTRIBUTE TO FORCE AIMS? EG. CRIME & DISORDER STRATEGY, CORPORATE PLAN, ANNUAL POLICING PLAN.**

Reduction in demand will release more resource time.

<b>ASSESSMENT:</b> Who did what and when? Include resources used.		
When did the action take place?	What action took place? Who was involved?	Costs <i>(to be completed by Admin)</i>
May 2000	Major problems identified at 16 Harmer Close in relation to home management and poor staff. Unit manager resigned and home closed down on 26th May	
Summer 2000	New misper protocol put on trial. Absent without authority residents not classified as mispers. Staff to report to police as AWA which recorded on Call Card or 420 but NFPA. If absence falls outside of normal behaviour then home recontacts police to make full misper report.	
October 2000	Misper protocol formally agreed and approved by HQ CID Also agreed that. Home staff would ensure that all telephone enquiries completed before contacting the police. If 2 or more staff at home they would check likely addresses themselves. No criminal damage to home property under £60 value will be reported. Minor assaults also to be dealt with in house unless staff member specifically wants police involved. Minor disorder incidents not to be reported to police although; police will attend to prevent BOTP.	
January 2001	Takeover of 23 Romney Avenue from CL Sector, same protocol agreed and implemented. Beat Managers for each home visit regularly to deal with non urgent matters, only serious and urgent incidents reported to police immediately.	

Useful Contacts (including telephone numbers):

**What are the results of these action(s)?** Are follow up actions needed? Additional Comments

Jan —October 2001 FGH misper reports have reduced by 70% compared to 2000, and 84% compared with 1999. Total district mispers have reduced by 35% compared to 2000, and reduced by 38% compared to 1999.

Relationship with Bishopthorpe Road, Romney Avenue, and area management now excellent.  
Closure of Harmer Close.

Through liaison one regular misper removed from care to reside at address where he constantly went missing to. Another resident put in to secure accommodation, and another has been moved to a civil secure unit. One problem member of staff has been transferred to another unit on Police recommendation..

Police 999 demand has reduced by 78% compared to 2000. (14 less calls) Jan — May figures only so far  
General demand reduced by 54% compared to 2000. (31 less calls) Jan — May figures only so far

Arrests	4713	Refused Charge	Other	Intelligence	Success Rating* (to be completed by Sector Insp/deputy)

**Date completed:**

**Date to CSG (if appropriate):**

Use continuation sheets where necessary