Case Study

This case study is a composite of real missing person cases that the Search and Rescue team have experienced.

What has happened

Angela is a 31 year-old woman who works in retail. She is unmarried and lives alone. She is reported missing by her mother when she fails to arrive at work. She was last seen the previous evening by friends.

Additional Information

Angela is taking medication for depression. She has recently separated from her partner. Her car is found in a car park at a local beauty spot. Her mobile, which is switched off, is found near her car.
Staffordshire Search and Rescue (SSART) is a team of dedicated volunteers with specialist training to locate and rescue missing people.

- Founded in 2004
- Member of ALSAR
- Self-sufficient Foot-Search Team
- Control & Support Vehicles and digital radio system
- On-call 24/7 365 days
- 2 x NSARDA qualified Dog and Handler
- Water Rescue Team / Kayak Boat section
- Rope Rescue Operators
- First Responder qualified & First Aid

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<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of missing person reports each day in Staffordshire (av)</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of ‘call-outs’ 13/14</td>
<td>38</td>
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<td>Hours spent training</td>
<td>8,000</td>
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<td>Hours spent searching</td>
<td>3,000</td>
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<td>Operational volunteers</td>
<td>76</td>
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Missing Continuum

- Lost Person
- Person who is voluntary missing
- Missing Person who may be under the influence of a third party
- Missing Person due to accident, incident, illness

Grampian Police (2007:1)

Evidence Base:
Missing Behaviour Profiles

UK Grampian Police data (2007)
- 80% depressed females, who use a motor vehicle, are found 45 kilometres from place missing
- 80% are located within 21 hours
- 32% return home of own accord.
- Distance between vehicle found and place found 80% - 500 metres (Suicidal females)
- Drowning is the most common method of suicide in females aged between 18-31 years

- 26% of despondent persons found in a structure
- 25% of despondent persons found in woods
- 15% of despondent persons in water
- Many despondent persons are found just out of sight’ (50% within 0.7 miles of place last known)

UK Study of Missing Persons (2011)
- 16% of females found in water on farmlands
- 35% females found in buildings

UK National Crime Agency UK Data and Analysis (2012/13)
- 66% located five miles from their home.
- The majority (28%) stayed with friend.
Missing females account for 47% of recorded missing person reports each year in the UK. (Total figure male & female 306,000) NCA Data and Analysis (2012/13)

80% of the missing population believed to have mental health problems, with the majority of people experiencing depression and anxiety (Missing People 2015)

Geographies of Missing People (2013) study interviewed 45 adults following a period of missing. 76% of the participants reported mental ill health. In the same study 42% of adults expressed suicidal thoughts during the missing episode and 33% had attempted to end their own life (Stevenson et al 2013)

Newiss (2011) Learning from Fatal Disappearances found suicide to be the ‘largest single known cause of death in missing person cases’ (Missing People 2015:2)

In the same study Newiss found depression to be “the most common indicator of vulnerability in 44% of cases” (Missing People 2015:2)
The Voices of Missing People

Researchers Stevenson et al (2013) in their qualitative study into the Geographies of Missing People discuss how behaviour profiling has limitations. The researchers suggest search strategies and scenarios should be informed by the voices of missing persons because this helps us understand:

- why people go missing
- what missing people think about
- how they plan
- How they decide what to do
- where they go

**Sophie** “I don’t know why I thought of that place, it was kind of perfect because it wasn’t far away and I didn’t feel I could go to anybody, obviously I couldn’t drive, so it had to be somewhere I could to on foot and somewhere that was secluded” (p.47)

**Coleen** “there’s a cliff there I was going to jump off. It was the same cliff as I had plans to jump off years back” (p.45)
Within an hour of receiving the call-out SMS, twenty-two operational Search and Rescue members arrive at scene of a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary operation.

- Time = survivability

5 x 4 person land-base foot teams are deployed to undertake searches of designated search areas. The search perimeters are set out in line with Koester (2008) data.

Specific magnets identified and checked - Water features, structures and buildings, terrain boundaries
### Common standards:
#### Key Skills and Knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search Technician</th>
<th>Team Leaders</th>
<th>Search Planners and Managers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Search Theory and Techniques</td>
<td>• Team leadership</td>
<td>• Manage the physical search effort on behalf of or alongside the Police including the coordination of resources, search planning, management and deployment</td>
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<tr>
<td>• First Aid</td>
<td>• Lost Person Behaviour</td>
<td>• It is not unusual for ALSAR Search Managers to act as tactical advisors to the Police during a search (<a href="http://www.lowlandrescue.org">www.lowlandrescue.org</a>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Navigation</td>
<td>• Welfare</td>
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<td>• Lost Person Behaviour</td>
<td>• Incident management</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Health &amp; Safety</td>
<td>• Brief/debrief</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Risk Assessment</td>
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<td>• Water Safety</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Communications</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Crime Scene Preservation</td>
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**ALSAR Lowland Rescue**

- 33 *member units across the UK*
- 43 *Air-Scenting dogs nationally*
- 844 *call-outs since Jan 2014*
- 82,794 sq. KM woodland, moorland, farmland, towns, cities
- 224,550 *man-hours contributed in a single year 14*
- 150 *average hours per searcher*
- 1,497 *members nationally*
- £4,185,612 (5894576.77 Euros) *in equivalent police salary saved in a year*
Key Legislation, Policy Drivers and Guidance

- Civil Contingencies Act 2008
- Guidance on Multi-Agency Interoperability, National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) (2009)
- Guidance on the management, recording and investigation of Missing Persons (2010) ACPO, National Policing Improvement Agency (NIPA)
Key Messages from Legislation and Policy

Work together to protect and *safeguard* missing children and adults at risk

Voluntary organisations play a key role in the delivery of emergency services responses to missing person incidents

Collaborative practice and a partner-led approach

Multi-disciplinary

Communicate and share resources, skills, knowledge, specialisms

Share priorities – achieve the same goal
How policy informs the operational actions of SSART

- Risk Assessment and understanding of safeguarding
- Multi-agency response activated and deployment of statutory and non-statutory services and personnel
- Shared intelligence and information
- Multi-disciplinary response activated and deployed both human and non-human resources
- Shared and coordinated communications

Lowland Rescue teams exist within a complex interplay of statutory and non-statutory organisations working together to achieve one shared goal – the location and recovery of the missing person.

These partnerships bring together “diverse actors enrolled into networks to achieve particular goals through an optimum passage point (OPP) in this case the site of the emergency. These networks incorporate both human and non-human actors such as search dogs and human handlers” Yarwood (2010:5)
A cohesive, integrated, evidence based approach in Lowland Rescue

**Partnership**
- Partnership-led approach and response
- Multi-disciplinary
- Collaborative practice
- Shared goals and priorities
- Shared resources, skills and knowledge

**Participation**
- Inclusion
- Engagement

**Provision**
- Standards and capabilities
- Experience and knowledge
- Evidence informed approaches
- Spontaneous resources
- Technologies
Key Message

“You hope that success means that a missing person is found safe and well, but that, unfortunately, it is not always the case, people sometimes ask me, why I volunteer for this job. I guess I do it in the hope that in difficult circumstances like this I can bring some kind of closure even though the outcome may confirm the loss of a family member, loved one or a close friend”

Gavin (SSART)

References


NPIA (2011) *Missing Persons: Data and Analysis 2012/13*


