

Contact Details

As we are still in the initial phase of our project where we are seeking ethical approval from both Abertay University Ethics Committee and Police Scotland, we would welcome any possible comments and feedback regarding the ideas presented in this poster. If you wish to contact us please email Claire Taylor at ***C.Taylor2@abertay.ac.uk***, Dr Penny Woolnough at ***P.Woolnough@abertay.ac.uk*** or Professor Geoff Dickens at ***G.Dickens@abertay.ac.uk***.

Alternatively, you can contact us and find out more information via our website or social media accounts:

Website – www.multiplemissing.weebly.com

Twitter – www.twitter.com/MultipleMissing

Facebook - www.facebook.com/Multiple-Missing-1503858689926332/

Thank you for your interest in the Multiple Missing project, we hope you enjoyed the conference and we look forward to hearing any comments or ideas that you may have regarding our research.





Multiple Missing: Behavioural Consistency in Repeat Missing Adults

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Background & Rationale

UK police receive approximately 350,000 missing person reports on a yearly basis, costing up to £2500 per case (Shalev Greene & Pakes, 2013). It is believed that around 38% of all reported incidents involve individuals who have previously gone missing (National Crime Agency, 2012/13). Despite the financial and human costs that are associated with each missing episode, research into and theory development regarding repeat missing behaviour is extremely underdeveloped.

To date, research has focused on children and adolescents who run away from care (Biehal & Wade, 2000) and a small body of research on the related topic of absconding from mental health inpatient settings has also been developed (O'Shea & Dickens, 2015). This has increased our knowledge of prevalence rates, outcomes and staff influence however our understanding of why adults repeatedly go missing and their vulnerabilities and experiences whilst away are in their infancy.

Missing episodes can be indicators of significant vulnerabilities and up to 80% of adult missing persons are thought to have mental health issues (Gibb & Woolnough, 2007; Holmes, Woolnough, Gibb, Lee & Crawford, 2013). Spatial profiling suggests that there may be a degree of behavioural consistency amongst missing persons with the same mental health disorder (Gibb & Woolnough, 2007). Therefore exploring adults 'missing careers' and consistencies across their repeat incidents will provide critical insights into the future safeguarding of this vulnerable population.

Research Questions & Objectives

1. Clarify operational and conceptual definitions of the term 'missing persons' through concept analysis.
2. Establish what is already known about those who repeatedly go missing through systemic review of existing international literature.
3. Establish whether adults who go missing repeatedly differ from those who only go missing once
4. To what extent are adult repeat missing episodes behaviourally and functionally consistent across time and with their normal lives?
5. What risks do repeat missing adults face?
6. What can we learn about repeat missing adults in relation to multi-agency prevention and safeguarding strategies?



Methodology

Stage 1 – Quantitative analysis of existing data in relation to all adult repeat missing persons reported to Police Scotland. All identified cases will be analysed to establish the nature and incidence of repeat missing adults including potential risk factors such as, age, sex, mental health, number of missing incidents, duration and location found.

Stage 2 – Interviews with repeat missing. Individuals will be recruited with the support of Police Scotland, following which, in-depth interviews and psychological testing will be conducted to provide critical insights into the nature of individuals missing episodes including psychological, functional, behavioural and geographical aspects to help identify potential consistencies.

Stage 3 – Interviews with care providers within the top 10 locations for repeat missing adults across Scotland such as hospitals, will be conducted. The interviews will examine their views, responsibilities, experiences and attitudes towards repeat missing adults.

Practical Implications

This is the first psychologically-focused study of its kind, and will provide an enhanced understanding of the key issues for strategic innovation in the prevention and protection of repeat missing adults. Results will be of interest and practical relevance to practitioners and policy makers and contribute to academic debates in investigative and experimental psychology, human geography and mental health. Various outputs will be disseminated including briefing papers, academic papers and website updates can be found on our website www.multiplemissing.weebly.com.

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