



## WPC Software Limited

WPC Software Limited is an established provider of information technology solutions, designing and developing complex applications, as well as offering a full range of IT consultancy services.

With a focus on the public sector, our knowledge and experience of that market has allowed us to deliver services that add real value, offer strong post-sales support and, crucially, deliver on time and within budgets.

WPC's customers include over 95% of police forces in the UK as well as local authorities, government agencies, fire & rescue services and private companies.

## Helping manage a new approach to missing people

Concern about poor data on young runaways has grown in the light of recent high-profile cases involving the sexual exploitation of children by gangs.

An investigation by Ofsted in 2013 found "significant differences" between reports of missing children made by the police and by local authorities.

Police are now changing the way they categorise reports of missing children in a bid to focus on those at greatest risk of abuse and free up valuable resources.

A computer system is helping officers to record and manage missing cases of all risk levels appropriately, and share that information with local authorities and other partners.

The COMPACT system - which is currently used by 22 UK police forces - builds up complex case histories of missing people and maintains a log of every risk assessment made.

Det Insp Phil Shakesheff of West Mercia Police, who is deputy chairman of the COMPACT user group, said the introduction of the new 'absent' category - where there is thought to be no immediate or apparent risk to the individual - means police need to increase the amount of data that is shared with other agencies.

"About a third of reports made to police are considered to be low risk and often involve youngsters who go missing repeatedly for short periods," he said. "This places a huge drain on resources and makes it difficult for police to focus on the most high risk cases.

"The introduction of the absent category will see police take a more risk-based approach to the problem and recent additions to COMPACT will help us manage this process."

Following three-month pilot schemes, it is anticipated that the new 'absent' definition could reduce police deployments by as much as 30 per cent. However, the need for accurate information on these cases and the ability to share this with partners will be more important than ever.

The new COMPACT v5 - which has been developed by WPC Software - now includes an area to manage reports of absent cases and build up an important history of occurrences of both missing and absent cases.



## COMPACT— Misper Case Management System

COMPACT—Misper is an investigation and case management tool specifically designed to manage the complex needs of missing people.

### Benefits

Enables effective processing and management of missing people whilst integrating information with other investigation toolsets, government agencies and associated charities.

COMPACT—Misper is the most widely used Missing Persons case management system in use by UK police forces.

"In order to achieve such results police need to be able to record all details of absent cases, identify patterns of behaviour, and share that information with their partners," added Det Insp Shakesheff. "That's what COMPACT allows us to do.

"It gives us a clearer picture of why people go missing repeatedly and allows us to work closely with local authorities and care homes to reduce these episodes."

COMPACT automatically shares details of missing persons cases with the relevant local authority, which helps to ensure that police and partners have access to the same level of intelligence when safeguarding young people.

Statistics shared at a local level can highlight the performance of care homes and their role in the safeguarding process. COMPACT also has links with other partner organisations including the UK Missing Persons Bureau, to ensure that accurate data is collated at the national level.

"Sharing this huge amount of additional information with local authorities and other agencies will present huge challenges for those police forces without an effective IT system to do the job," said Det Insp Shakesheff. "COMPACT does it all automatically."

As part of an absent case, a review time is agreed with the caller. This time should be used by the caller to carry out their own enquiries. If, after the review period, the missing person's whereabouts are still not known and the risk is deemed greater, the absent case may be upgraded to a missing case.

Police users of COMPACT can specify these review times to check the status of absent people and build up detailed profiles of these individuals. The system prompts users when reviews are due to be carried out.

"Case supervisors will have all the missing and absent case histories instantly available on a single system," added Det Insp Shakesheff. "This will give them a much clearer idea of the risks involved and when to deploy officers to investigate the most serious cases."

When someone goes missing or absent multiple times in a set period, COMPACT automatically prompts officers to set up an intervention meeting with care providers.

"Details of any actions agreed by partners at these meetings to reduce absences are recorded on the system so that their success or otherwise can be judged," said Det Insp Shakesheff.

"So COMPACT is much more than just a database for recording information, it actively drives multi-agency working and prompts users when action needs to be taken."

Research by Ofsted highlighted that safeguarding vulnerable people is a multi-agency function, with the need for local authorities, police and care homes to work together. In particular, the need to share valuable intelligence as part of the return interview is a vital stage in ensuring a child is safe, well, and protected in the future.

"Quite often police and local safeguarding teams don't know they have a vulnerable child in their area until they become a victim of crime or go missing," added Det Insp Shakesheff. "This is because councils don't always tell each other when moving a child from one local authority area to another.

"When police complete a safe and well check COMPACT notifies the host authority and alerts them they have a child from outside their area. They can then take steps to improve communications with the neighbouring authority and gather valuable intelligence about the child."

The latest version of COMPACT also includes a new module for managing child abduction warning notices which are issued to those suspected of grooming children.

"The system helps police identify those youngsters who are most at risk of abuse by creating detailed profiles not just of young runaways, but also their suspected abusers and highlights links between individuals," said Det Insp Shakesheff.

"So if, for example, someone has been served with a notice in one part the force area and is involved with another child in a different district, COMPACT will flag up that connection."

Details of this level of information raised at strategy meetings with local authorities can help steer the strategy for a particular child.

Det Insp Shakesheff concluded that the results of the Home Office pilot scheme had been encouraging but added that technology would be crucial to its successful roll-out.

"The changes are designed to help police focus on more high risk cases and safeguard the most vulnerable youngsters in our society," he said. "But officers need to have an effective IT system in place in order to drive these changes forward."