

NATIONAL MISSING PERSONS FRAMEWORK FOR SCOTLAND: UPDATE MAY 2018

Introduction

The Scottish Government's vision is to build a fairer Scotland where everyone is engaged in their community, and where the most vulnerable are protected from danger and encouraged to play a full and active part in society.

Feeling safe and secure in our communities helps to give us a sense of belonging and allows us to achieve a better quality of life as both contributors and beneficiaries of our communities.

People who go missing often do so because they lack that sense of belonging and have lost the trust in society that most of us take for granted. In any given year, well over 20,000 missing person investigations are conducted in Scotland. Many of these relate to vulnerable individuals who may be at risk of harm and abuse. A full set of up-to-date statistics on missing people in Scotland is attached in **Annex B**.

The [National Missing Persons Framework for Scotland](#) (the Framework) was developed to help prevent people from going missing in the first place and to ensure they receive the best possible support when they do. It supports a multi-agency approach and builds on best practice being delivered in areas across Scotland.

This document sets out the progress being made on the Framework's objectives one year on from publication, as well as priorities for the future.

Missing Persons Framework

People go missing for a whole variety of reasons – and, often these aren't immediately clear. Difficulties in education; mental health conditions; child sexual exploitation; domestic abuse; relationship breakdown are among the factors which can play a part in driving people to take the desperate measure of leaving their daily lives in the hope of creating a release or escape from how they are feeling or what they are experiencing.

The Framework brings together the excellent practice that already exists for people who go or are at risk of going missing. In doing this, the Framework recognises that there are many organisations involved in the delivery of services with people who go missing and their families. The Framework highlights good practice and brings more national consistency to the work going on locally with missing people.

For example, the Framework sets out a clear definition of a missing person which all agencies can use consistently when undertaking risk assessments for a missing person.

The definition – which is used by Police Scotland and widely adopted by organisations across the country - states that a missing person is anyone whose whereabouts are unknown and:

- Where the circumstances are out of character; or
- The context suggests the person may be the subject of crime; or
- The person is at risk of harm to themselves or another.

Aims and implementation

By building on existing good practice the Framework set out two national aims

- to prevent people from going missing in the first place; and
- to limit the harm associated with people going missing.

To realise the aims of the Framework, we have developed an [implementation plan](#) acknowledging that actions span national and local government, the statutory sector, third sector and voluntary agencies to help people who may go or who have been missing. It is important that relevant organisations take the lead in their own areas.

Progress

Details of each action within the delivery plan are set out below (**Annex A**) but some key achievements can be summarised here:

- We have **developed return discussion training** to ensure that all those who have returned from a missing episode receive sensitive and appropriate support. This training is now being delivered across Scotland for the first time.
- **We have increased our understanding of how local issues impact on people going missing across Scotland.** This information is being used to adapt best practice to suit local circumstances and ensure that services are appropriate for each area.
- **We have supported the Missing People Charity to expand their operations in Scotland** and provide vital expert advice to people who have gone missing and their families. This has helped to ensure that support services which are sensitive to the needs of a missing person are available when required.

Scottish Government, May 2018

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Action	Lead area	Progress	Next steps
1.1: Develop or strengthen local multi-agency partnerships working in all 32 local authority areas	All agencies working with missing persons including: Local Authorities, Police Scotland, Education Services, NHS Scotland, Third Sector	<p>We have completed an initial mapping survey across local authorities. It confirmed that 85% of respondents were part of a multi-agency partnership. There was variation across the partnerships, but 48% reported that partnership working had been improved following use of the Framework.</p> <p>These are very positive and promising outcomes given the short time that the Framework has been in place. It is crucial to ensure that different agencies are working collaboratively to deliver positive outcomes for missing people and their families.</p>	We will now follow up the survey by identifying and working with the multi-agency groups in each local authority area. We will build understanding and map current practice, help to identify good practice and recognition of why different approaches work more effectively in different areas and circumstances.
1.2: All agencies adopt the national definition of missing persons and incorporate this into their work.	As in 1.1 plus Care Inspectorate	The survey has demonstrated that 82% of respondents were very familiar, quite familiar or familiar with the definition. A common understanding of the language used in relation to and missing people is essential to increase the standardisation of approaches and ensure appropriate responses when a person goes missing ensuring that different agencies do not end up talking at cross-purposes. Awareness of the definition is high and we will build on this.	Follow-up work to the survey is vital to ensure that we achieve a common understanding and usage of language, while initial uptake of the definition has been very positive, the more it is improved the greater consistent understanding will be.
2.1: As part of	Care	To help identify best practice and innovation, Police	Evaluation is currently taking place to

care plan for vulnerable children and adults, a risk assessment should be carried out to assess the likelihood of the individual going missing.	Inspectorate, Local authority adult and child protection teams, NHS Scotland	Scotland has been running pilot projects looking to identify effective ways of working with looked after children and adults in care settings. Evaluations of these are now underway and we anticipate that the outcomes from these will be influential in helping to undertake better risk assessments when someone goes missing and the interventions which are needed to support individuals and prevent them from going missing in the future.	learn from this work. Thereafter we will, where appropriate, work with Police Scotland to look at the best ways to disseminate the findings from these pilots and promote best practice.
2.2: Development of our understanding of local issues and circumstances which may impact on people going missing through a multi-agency partnership approach to this issue.	Local organisations including: Police Scotland, Local authorities, Third Sector organisations	Police Scotland has been looking to better understand how local circumstances impact on patterns of people going missing and what we can learn from this. This information is shared with relevant partners in specific locations across Scotland to highlight issues or concerns in local areas where there may be a need to tailor interventions in light of those circumstances to prevent individuals from going missing again.	This is an on-going process and the need to continue to gather and disseminate information on a regular basis as local circumstances develop and change is clear. We will support the use of appropriate information to enable good practice to be disseminated widely and adapted to meet local needs.
3.1: All agencies develop and incorporate a standardised approach to risk assessment.	All agencies as described in 1.1 and 1.2	The survey showed that 50% of respondents are using risk assessment within the Framework for adults and 42% are using the Framework to evaluate issues surrounding missing people. This data is extremely important in identifying who is most at risk of going missing so that interventions can be made to prevent further potential missing incidents.	Although the figures are encouraging, more is still required. Through multi-agency groups we will re-emphasise the importance of the standardised use of risk assessment.
3.2: Support the	All agencies	We are pleased to confirm that data is being	We recognise that the membership of

<p>delivery of a multi-agency partnership approach through the development of an appropriate data sharing protocol or strengthen existing data sharing protocol.</p>	<p>as described in 1.1 and 1.2</p>	<p>shared between statutory bodies when appropriate, and that this is particularly strong where multi-agency or partnership agreements are in place such as Adult and Child Protection Committees.</p>	<p>multi-agency groups is critical to ensure that effective data sharing takes place. We will build our current knowledge and ensure that best practice in relation to multi-agency partnerships is identified and shared across the country.</p>
<p>3.3: A review of outcomes of the three pilot projects run by Police Scotland needs to be undertaken and recommendations made on learning before national or local roll out.</p>	<p>Police Scotland, Local Authorities, Care Inspectorate, NHS Scotland</p>	<p>There are two evaluations of pilot projects currently underway. These are in relation to adults who go missing from care settings and Looked After children who go missing from care. Once completed the evaluations will inform next steps and future roll out of protocols.</p>	<p>We will consider the evaluations and recommendations when complete. If favourable, we will work with Police Scotland and partners to progress roll out of the pilots on a national basis.</p>
<p>4.1: Ensure that return discussion are available for everyone who has been missing and returned and that these are tailored to the individual and used to help</p>	<p>All agencies as described in 1.1 and 1.2</p>	<p>Return discussions continue to be carried out by Police Scotland in the main, with 91% of return discussions conducted in 2017-18 following investigation and a person returning from being missing. Return Discussion training has been developed to increase and standardise approach to the discussions and illustrate the benefit of more organisations being involved in facilitating the discussions.</p>	<p>Delivery of training to be completed. Evaluation and findings will then be considered but work to ensure more responsibility is taken across other sectors beyond Police Scotland is likely to be required.</p>

prevent repeat missing episodes.		Delivering better quality return discussions will help to reduce the number of people who go missing on a regular basis.	
4.2: Local missing persons multi-agency partnerships agree a protocol for delivering return discussions.	All agencies as described in 1.1 and 1.2	Progress made in 4.1 shows that more can be done on this commitment, with Police Scotland continuing to conduct the majority of return discussions across the country. Better understanding of who is best to conduct return discussions is needed to ensure the best outcomes possible for missing people.	Next steps will follow training evaluation as described in 4.1 and work around practice with multi-agency partnerships as described in 1.1.
4.3: Support is made available to families of missing people.	All agencies as described in 1.1 and 1.2 and including all partners in multi-agency group.	Referring families to support services is crucial both during and after a missing person investigation and is incorporated into the training that is being taken forward. We are pleased that the Missing People charity offers support for the families of people who may, are or have been missing, while organisations such as Samaritans and Childline offer wider support for a range of issues.	Developing better understanding and greater awareness of local provision is required to help support families who are dealing with or have experienced a family member missing. Evaluation from the return discussion training will be taken into account around where support can be accessed and how this can be promoted.
5.1: Raise awareness of the risks of going missing.	Scottish Government	Understanding the risks of going missing is essential in our drive to prevent people from taking such a step. Risks of going missing on a regular basis are raised with those who attend return discussion training. Awareness of risks is being increased through information available via the Missing People website and Runaway helpline along with daily interaction particularly between young people and Barnardo's, Shelter Scotland and other third sector organisations. Going forward this is an area where we will be looking to do more.	Next steps in line with 6.3 to raise awareness centre on wider education for young people. Further options for campaign around the risks of missing will also be explored.
6.1: Develop	Scottish	The Scottish Government has funded the	Delivery will be completed and evaluation

<p>training for those who will be delivering return discussions.</p>	<p>Government</p>	<p>development and delivery of training through partnership between Barnardo's, Shelter Scotland, University of Glasgow and led by Missing People charity.</p> <p>This is a very significant step forward as it both recognises the central role that return discussions play in ensuring individuals do not fall into patterns of going missing, and acknowledges that there is a best practice level to which all those working with missing people can aspire. In the longer term we would anticipate that this will have a positive impact on reducing the numbers of individuals who go missing on a regular basis.</p>	<p>will take place before consideration of next steps.</p>
<p>6.2: Map multi-agency working across 32 local authorities and monitor the implementation of the National Framework.</p>	<p>Scottish Government</p>	<p>A initial mapping survey has been conducted to determine use, understanding and awareness of the Framework across Scotland, this has given information on the current multi-agency working on 'missing people' with 85% of respondents indicating that they or their organisation are part of a multi-agency partnership.</p> <p>This is the first time that this data has been collected centrally, and this information is vital to inform how we develop this agenda in the longer term. Multi-agency working is the key to delivering better outcomes for both missing people themselves and their families, and recognising where these are working well is an essential part of identifying best practice so that this can be replicated across Scotland for the benefit of all.</p>	<p>Follow up work will be taken forward to discover more about the partnerships in operation.</p>
<p>6.3: Educate</p>	<p>Scottish</p>	<p>Main focuses of the health and wellbeing area of</p>	<p>Work with Education Scotland will be</p>

<p>children and young people about the risks of going missing.</p>	<p>Government</p>	<p>the curriculum is on mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing and these are essential for successful learning. There is currently no direct information around the risks of going missing or what signs may be to identify the risks.</p> <p>This recommendation has been designed with prevention in mind. Ultimately our goal here is to prevent people from going missing in the first place so that they are not exposed to risk, abuse and harm. However, where this is not possible, we seek to reduce the number of times an individual goes missing so that the underlying issue which lead to a missing incident can be addressed at as early a stage as possible.</p> <p>Early intervention in schools and youth work settings is certainly one way to help prevent incidents of individuals going missing, and ensuring that young people understand the risks and know that there are support services that they can access if they are in crisis will help to reduce the number of missing incidents.</p>	<p>taken forward to progress education resource that can be used as part of the curriculum and educate young people around the risks of going missing.</p>
<p>6.4: Reviewing the administrative options for handling missing persons estates.</p>	<p>Scottish Government</p>	<p>Ensuring that the estates of missing people can run while they are missing is central to allowing them to return to their previous lives, if they wish to do so, without suffering the loss of their assets. The administrative options for missing persons estates is being considered as part of the Judicial Factors (Scotland) Bill to consider the process for managing an estate in difficult circumstances.</p>	<p>The Scottish Government is currently considering the Scottish Law Commission (SLC) report on Judicial Factors. This consideration will include the handling of missing person estates. A consultation on the SLC report recommendations is due to be published later in 2018.</p>

**NATIONAL MISSING PERSONS FRAMEWORK FOR SCOTLAND:
KEY STATISTICS**

In the twelve months since the publication of the Framework it is clear to see that missing persons remains a significant issue that is spread across all local authorities in Scotland. In 2017-18 Police Scotland recorded statistics that showed there were:

- 22,966 Police Scotland investigations were taken forward for missing persons in 2017-18.
- 58% of all investigations were for a male.
- 64% of investigations are for a child with just over half for a looked after child.
- 2% (538 investigations) for someone with dementia.
- 89% return or returned within 48 hours with 98% within 2 weeks.
- 57% (13,124) of investigations relate to someone who has already been missing in that financial year.
- Of those traced deceased, 78% (75) were male and 77% (74) were adult men, 90% of whom had not been missing before and 60% of whom had no known mental health vulnerability.
- 5% (1,208) of investigations were categorised as 'high' risk, the majority 51% (11,760) of investigations were assessed as medium risk.
- 69% of people were reported missing between 5 pm and 7 am.
- 46% of people went missing from their home address followed by young person's unit 28%.

More information on key statistics can be found on www.scotland.police.uk.