



To: Children and Young People Thematic Board

On: 31 March 2016

Report by:

Peter MacLeod, Director of Children's Services

Developing a National Missing Persons Strategy: Provision of Return Interviews

1. Summary

- 1.1 The National Missing Persons Steering Group is currently developing good practice guidance which will support the provision of return interviews across Scotland. Each Community Planning Partnership (CPP) has been asked to co-ordinate a survey response to gather information about current practice. Renfrewshire CPP's response is detailed in Appendix1.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board notes the Community Planning Partnership response to the Provision of Return Interviews survey

3. Background

- 3.1 The National Missing Persons Steering Group has been established to support the development of a national Strategy to address the issue of missing people by providing advice and expert knowledge to the Scottish Government. Members are drawn from local authorities (including Renfrewshire Council), third sector organisations, NHS, CoSLA, Police Scotland and Scottish Government. The Steering Group is currently leading on developing guidance on return interviews and also creating a national definition of 'missing'.
- 3.2 On 2 February 2016, the Steering Group wrote to all Community Planning Partnerships to advise that they are currently developing good practice guidance which will support the provision of return interviews across Scotland and are gathering information from CPP's about current practice.
- 3.3 As a range of agencies and professionals may be involved in return interviews the Steering Group requested that CPP's co-ordinate a response to the survey by 14 March 2016. Following this, the members of the Child and Adult Protections Committees were consulted on the survey and the response is detailed in Appendix 1.

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Provision of Return Interviews – survey of Community Planning Partnerships

1. In your local authority area, are return interviews routinely provided or offered for:

- **children and young people** who have been missing?
- **adults** who have been missing?

Both children and adults are interviewed on return by Police Scotland. Additionally, for children and young people, Renfrewshire Council and Police Scotland have jointly commissioned Barnardo's Scotland to undertake return interviews for children and young people who go missing as part of the Safer Choices Missing Service.

2. What are the differences, if any, in terms of the process you use for adults versus children and young people?

In respect of police interviews, other than adapting the style of the police officers approach, the basic format is the same for both.

For children and young people, we have commissioned a specialist service where the approach is about engaging with the young person in order to establish a relationship and from there determine the best approach to discussing the missing episode. This service has been commissioned partly in recognition of the fact that frontline police officers would not have the time and depending on their experience may not have the necessary skills/training to undertake this process.

This service is specific to children and young people as we recognise that this is not necessarily an approach that would be beneficial for all missing person cases. Other situations, such as adults with dementia for example, may require a different process.

3. Who presently carries out return interviews? (For example a third-sector organisation, police officer, social worker, housing officer, health professional.)

For all adults and children who go missing the initial return interview is carried out by front line uniformed police officers. This includes a "safe and well" check. It is best practice if possible that the enquiry officers do this interview as they have a working knowledge of the enquiry and they know the avenues to explore for example if a name or address has come to light and needs to be expanded upon as part of the interviewing plan. These officers are also able to explain the collective actions taken to locate the missing person. However, there remains some concern for officers in that often due to circumstances, the return interview provides little meaningful intelligence or actionable information which could assist them in their duties.

As identified above, Renfrewshire Council and Police Scotland have jointly commissioned Barnardo's Scotland to undertake return interviews for children and young people who go missing as part of the Safer Choices Missing Service. We firmly view return interviews as a process rather a single interview. In addition to Safer Choices staff, our staff in children's houses and our locality teams will also where appropriate/ necessary participate in a return interview process with children and young people. Our local police officers also undertake safe and well checks as identified above which contributes to the process. Depending on

relationships, education pastoral care type staff (ie guidance teachers) may also participate in the process

4. Are any other people involved in discussions with the individual on their return?

Where an individual has a carer and it is in the person's interests and may be beneficial to the process then a carer may also be involved such as the individual's keyworker in a children's house or adult care home. For those individuals in receipt of statutory social work service then it is possible that their social worker could become involved. In respect of young people in education, as identified above, their pastoral care or guidance teacher could be involved. In each case it will be dependent on the individual's circumstances and their relationships with those professionals.

5. Is there any guidance available for people carrying out interviews? If 'yes' it would be helpful if you could share the guidance.

Section 19 and 20 of the Police Scotland Standing Operating Procedure Guide (SOP) covering Missing Person Investigations, gives guidance on the "Safe and Well" checks and management of return interview.

Safer Choices is a specific service and as such has it's own guidance. We have had for some time guidance regarding the response to children missing from local authority care however in practice this has extended to include children in the community. The guidance requires to be updated and we are awaiting feedback from the police led national pilot in order to do this.

Due to the known correlations between young people who go missing and the risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE), awareness raising information and guidance has been given to staff across the partnership area.

6. Is any training provided to those involved in return interviews? If 'yes', we would be grateful if you could provide information about the content and delivery of the training.

As stated above, Safer Choices is a specific service and as such has it's own training.

Since 2012, Renfrewshire has had in place a comprehensive training programme regarding CSE which explores missing episodes and staff engagement with young people. Bespoke training has also been provided to relevant social work staff by Police Scotland and Barnardo's Scotland.

In addition to their specific guidance, Police Scotland staff also receive on the job training supported by peers.

Renfrewshire has been keen to ensure that awareness is raised across the partnership regarding the concerns associated with people who go missing. To support this, a missing person strategy consultation event was held in Renfrewshire on 23rd November 2016 which was attended by representatives from across the partnership including elected members.

In addition to providing direct support to children/ young people and their families, the Safer Choices Service provides a consultation service to staff and regularly visit our children's houses to provide support and guidance to staff and be visible to young people should they wish to speak to a worker.

7. How is the information obtained during the interview shared with other agencies? (eg police if indication of criminality, or with support services, social worker etc)

Sharing of information is in line with data protection requirements.

Police concern reports regarding children and young people who go missing is shared by the police with children's services social work and Barnardo's Scotland. Barnardo's report back to the police and social work following their engagement with the young person and where appropriate their family.

Renfrewshire has an established Vulnerable Young Persons' Operational Group. Multi agency in nature and chaired by the police, this groups comes together to share information and consider plans and tactical action for those young people whom we are most concerned about in relation to missing episodes and/or the risk of CSE. Any service can refer to the group. This facility is an enhancement to the usual child protection and care planning processes.

Where the police have identified a possible adult protection concern or a wellbeing concern has been identified and the adult has given permission, police concern reports regarding adults who go missing are shared with the adult social work service.

8. What are the enablers or barriers, if any, to information sharing?

In general, working with a number of services together means that data processing arrangements can take time to establish.

However, in Renfrewshire there are robust structures in place to support good information sharing.

Police Scotland have morning review meetings covering missing people over the previous 24 hours. At a local management level this creates the opportunity to assess the immediate risk and intelligence in quick time at the earlier operational stage whilst also undertaking a slower form based review in respect of cross checks and sharing of information through the correct channels to the correct agencies.

In respect of children and young people, as previously mentioned there is a Vulnerable Young Persons Operational Group specifically to address concerns regarding missing episodes and the potential risks of CSE. This is overseen by a strategic group which ensures that any issues regarding information sharing are addressed timeously.

Information sharing can become more difficult in relation to independent care providers in the local area where Renfrewshire is not responsible for the young people in placement.

Renfrewshire also has in place effective early sharing arrangements through multi agency daily tasking meetings. Involving community safety, police and other appropriate services this can assist in sharing information and identifying risks in the community.

9. Do the return interviews identify what support is needed? If so, how is this taken forward (for example through referrals to local services, providing contact details for national organisations)?

At the initial point of contact, the police officer will undertake an assessment of risk and will complete a concern report to this effect. This is reviewed by the public protection hub managers who will then ensure all necessary information has been provided and determine which agencies

this information requires to be shared with/ referred on to and whether there may be a need for adult or child protection procedures. The police will also consider in respect of children or young people whether there may be a need for compulsory measures of care and will refer the matter to the Scottish Children's Reporters Administration.

In respect of adults who go missing, where there are no protection concerns identified, the police may still refer on to others services with the agreement of the adult.

In respect of children and young people, as noted previously the police will also make a referral to the Safer Choices Missing Service. Where initial information and engagement indicates a concern, Safer Choices staff undertake a specific risk assessment which feeds into the holistic social work assessment in determining what support is required. Depending on assessment, in addition to any other identified services, the Safer Choices Service may continue to provide one to one support to the child/ young person and their family.

The work of the Safer Choices Service feeds into the wider integrated assessment, looked after children and child protection assessment and planning processes. Any agency can refer to the service.

10. Please provide any other comments you wish to make.

Partners indicated they had protocols in relation to missing persons.