

RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM

Please Note this form **must** be returned with your response to ensure that we handle your response appropriately

1. Name/Organisation

Organisation Name

Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership – Safer and Stronger Thematic Board

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3. Permissions - I am responding as...

Individual

☐

/

Group/Organisation

☒

Please tick as appropriate

- (a) Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government web site)?

Please tick as appropriate ☐ Yes ☐ No

- (b) Where confidentiality is not requested, we will make your responses available to the public on the following basis

Please tick ONE of the following boxes

Yes, make my response, name and address all available ☐

or

Yes, make my response available, but not my name and address ☐

or

Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address ☐

- (c) The name and address of your organisation **will be** made available to the public (in the Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government web site).

Are you content for your **response** to be made available?

Please tick as appropriate ☒ Yes ☐ No

- (d) We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Please tick as appropriate

☒ Yes

☐ No

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

1. What are your views on the proposed Purpose of the Strategy?

Comments:

We agree with the purpose of the strategy which points towards organisations working together which is the approach that we adopt in Renfrewshire.

To be successful, the strategy will need to acknowledge and reflect the wide range of circumstances that can lead to people going missing. There are a number of situations that may cause an individual to go missing, including going missing as part of a wider family or associated group, being abducted by force, being a victim of sexual exploitation or trafficking or absconding from care. Although the overarching principle of agencies working together is relevant for all situations, there are subtleties of approach that need to be considered – in particular where there is reason to believe that coercion might be a factor in an individual going missing.

2. Are we right to have a national definition?

Yes ☒ No ☐

3. What are your views on the proposed definition above?

Comments

We agree that a common definition will aid understanding and consistency of approach and the proposed definition is broad and encompasses the key criteria that should be included. However in its current format it allows a relatively subjective view to be taken that does lead to some concern for professionals that have worked with missing cases in the past.

The primary issue with the definition that has been raised relates to circumstances such as the unseen child – where circumstances of not being seen might be absolutely “in character” yet should be raised as a “missing” concern in their own right. On the other hand the circumstances of something being “out of character” can on its own be a good indicator of a potential “missing” concern.

It is difficult to propose an alternative definition that would reliably cover all instances of missing persons. However, a bit more guidance on how to interpret possible missing cases or circumstances would be a useful addition to the strategy to bring objectivity to how the 4 objectives are then delivered.

What might be useful is a follow on section to the definition that brought more objectivity to bear – a ready reckoner of things to consider with links to best practice that could be updated and maintained and that gave a fuller range of issues or concerns that might be relevant in some cases. One such link might be to the definition in the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2014 (Para 618-26).

4. What works well in the Strategy?

Comments

The strategy is clear in its layout and easy to follow. The section setting out key facts was a useful context and a useful prompt to consider the local picture in a similar way. The links to other strategies was again useful and both these elements will need to be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they remain relevant and accurate.

The four objectives set out in the strategy are clear and provide a structured framework for partnerships and agencies to consider how best to define the approach to the issue of people who go missing.

A particular strength is the Prevent objective and the focus on understanding and supporting those that are at risk of going missing, a focus on early intervention that sits well with many other related approaches across the Community planning Partnership and if successful will have a significant impact on resources and in reducing the emotional impact caused by the issue of missing people. It also, usefully and appropriately, ties in directly with the wider Prevent agenda that seeks to prevent vulnerable people from becoming victims of crime or radicalised – both of which can lead to missing people or episodes..

The reference to case studies throughout the document is a good way to share best practise with relevant links to key sources of information. Again these should be regularly reviewed and updated within a final strategy.

The strategy clearly encourages partnership working which is welcomed and will assist in strengthening and improving information sharing and the best use of limited resources. In this respect the strategy will assist Renfrewshire in strengthening our response to people who go missing within the context of the wider public protection agenda.

The consistent reinforcement of the premise that agencies and services need to work together in order to support and protect people who go missing or may go missing is very positive.

5. What could we do better or differently in the Strategy?

Comments

Not better – but regularly updating key elements of the strategy as noted above will be required to maintain its impact and effectiveness.

6. What will be vital to the implementation of the Strategy?

Comments

For the strategy to be successfully implemented, it should continue to encourage the development of local frameworks, ensuring the widest range of community planning partners are included to maximise resources, knowledge and intelligence. It is important that each agency is clear on their own roles and responsibilities and those of all key partners involved. To this end effective communication and the development of good working relationships at a local level is paramount.

To this end we would support the premise set out in commitment 2, that the aim should be to build upon the types of effective multi agency working that are already in place within community planning partnerships rather than to develop new processes and procedures specifically for this agenda.

For example, in Renfrewshire, a process similar to other community planning areas is already in place, where potentially vulnerable individuals and groups are discussed at Community Safety Partnership Daily Tasking meetings, attended by a range of partners. These include, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue, NHS, and relevant services from Renfrewshire Council. These meetings are an opportunity for partners to exchange information in relation to people with the potential to go missing. Where there are reported incidents of missing persons, cases are discussed at Daily Tasking and shared with partners. Information is exchanged, including photographs where possible, among agencies, allowing them to respond rapidly and to deploy appropriate resources in response to the missing person's incident. With immediate links to relevant public space CCTV, Wardens and other community based frontline services a track record in quickly identifying and intervening in missing people cases has been developed.

7. Do you see any challenges to implementation of the Strategy?

Comments

Overcoming barriers to information sharing between relevant community planning partners is a challenge that needs to be addressed.

In some cases the barriers are technical - when information systems are different across services it can restrict the ease with which information is shared, but the real barrier is when a culture develops of a reluctance to share information for perceived legal or data protection reasons or because there is a belief that consent would be required. More needs to be done to reassure people of the legality of sharing information proportionately to protect individuals or communities and of developing trust among partners that information will be handled sensitively and appropriately by all.

The development of robust information sharing protocols and a visible demonstration that good practice in handling and sharing information is important can assist with this. This is where building on existing procedures and processes can be effective. For example a confidentiality statement is signed each day by every participant attending Renfrewshire Community Safety Partnership's Daily Tasking meeting as described in Q6, as a visible demonstration that information confidentiality is of paramount importance. This has been useful in promoting trust and confidence in the process among participants and in improving the quality and nature of information shared at the meetings to support early intervention.

Success will also rely on raising awareness and training for all partners ideally this would be through effective cross sector awareness raising training for all staff across the community planning partnership.

Finally, there are challenges around the provision of return interviews – both in terms of identifying the best service to carry these out and in some cases the capacity of individuals to participate effectively. How the information gained is appropriately shared in order to support other people at risk of going missing, or to reduce the likelihood of repeat episodes is also a challenge that needs to be resolved.

8. What issues are raised by this strategy for people with protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation)?

Comments

The strategy is relevant to all people, including those with protected characteristics. In implementing the strategy such information about any individual should be taken into account. Where relevant, consideration should be given to whether the protected characteristics may be a contributory factor in the individual's going missing, and also recognition needs to be given to whether there are particular support requirements that may be appropriate when conducting return interviews or offering ongoing support.

9. Are there likely to be any negative implications as a result of the strategy, particularly regarding children's wellbeing?

Comments

We do not believe there are any negative implications, however we would reinforce the comment made in Q1 above that each situation is unique and that responses should be suitably tailored to meet the needs of the child/young person involved.

10. Are there any other equality issues we should consider?

Comments

In terms of equalities, there is no current reference to migrants and people with learning disabilities and the additional support and communication needs that they might have.

Recognition needs to be given to addiction services within the strategy and also to people with learning disabilities that may not be in care or presenting with autism.

11. What are your views on the proposed Objectives and Commitments?

Comments

We feel that that the proposed Objectives and Commitments are relevant and provide the basis for a comprehensive approach to dealing with the issues around people who go missing in Scotland.

We would agree that GIRFEC and the role of the named person will need to be an embedded part of the response to the missing person agenda and these are noted within the strategy – however these focus particularly on young people. It might be useful to reinforce the role that similar Health Service professionals including GP's and Health Visitors might play in identifying and supporting other vulnerable groups in a similar way.

It is important that the strategy refers to all relevant policies – for example the Unseen Child Policy.

12. What are the challenges to delivering these Objectives and Commitments?

Comments

There is a sense that parents/carers and the wider adult population are somewhat out of touch as to what children/young people are involved with, particularly in terms of technology, social media etc. More should be done to ensure that parents/carers know of the potential hazards, for example cyber bullying, threat of radicalisation etc. in relation to young people and vulnerable adults.

As set out at Q7 a key challenge will be the establishment of information sharing protocols that are trusted and embraced by all partners and the mechanisms for sharing this information reliably across the variety of systems used within the partnership.

We believe that cross authority information sharing may also be a challenge. As an example, looked after and accommodated children/ young people can be accommodated outwith their own home area, yet they remain under the jurisdiction of their home authority. This is a factor in Renfrewshire with the existence of both the Kibble & Good Shepherd independent residential schools/safe centres within the local authority area, both of which accommodate vulnerable young people from across the UK. Similarly older people can sometimes be accommodated in specialist care facilities or provided with treatment outwith their home authority location. Further consideration needs to be given as to how information can be shared with both the responsible authority and local services, particularly Police. This also has an impact on the link that the named person might have and their influence.

There will be a requirement to ensure that existing policies, procedures and protocols are aligned with and recognise the requirements of the strategy.

13. What are your views on the Supporting Actions and are there any additional actions that would support delivery of the Strategy?

Comments

At present the supporting actions are quite dry and governance/procedural focused, relating to the development of protocols, strategies and groups. More could be done within the supporting actions to promote the development of cultural change and community cohesion that would support a more imaginative approach to the delivery of the Strategy and ensure maximum engagement.

For example, in Renfrewshire, StreetStuff provides a range of activities for young people, is easily accessible and provides a safe haven for potentially vulnerable young people. The service promotes a sense of community and increases connections among young people and knowledge of their individual experiences and whereabouts. They have built a strong rapport with young people in local communities who then feel comfortable about sharing and discussing concerns. On occasion children that are missing first turn up at StreetStuff activities – or are located through the network of peers who attend these services. The service plays a critical role in preventing, responding to and supporting young people that might otherwise go missing in Renfrewshire, or come to harm.

ROAR (Reaching Older Adults in Renfrewshire) works in partnership with older people and with local communities to build community capacity, improve health and wellbeing, maximise independence and reduce the impact of social isolation – all of which contribute to the prevent and support objectives of the national strategy in particular.

Within the Community Safety Partnership, the Wardens service and Youth Team help to build a sense of community by being present and active in local communities, building knowledge of local issues and being visible and accessible to local residents. As a result they can provide a useful link between local communities and other more formal interventions agencies and are particularly effective in supporting Police Scotland in response to a missing person enquiry. They also work directly with young people to achieve a sustainable change in behaviour, diverting them into more meaningful activities, with the potential to reduce missing persons episodes.

Using their local knowledge CCTV operatives play a pro-active role in the identification of vulnerable people who have the potential to go missing. Based in the Community Safety Hub they are also linked in with Police Scotland and the wardens service to respond to cases of missing persons.

In addition the I am Me, Keep Safe project that has started within Renfrewshire but is being rolled out nationwide is developing a network of keep safe locations where vulnerable people can gain support and assistance when out and about with an app that will provide their location, directions to the nearest location and additional community safety information that could also be an important source of help for people in relation to this agenda becoming a network which will support people

within the community preventing them from going missing, or providing a network of safe locations for people that are missing..

Finally, we feel that young people should be involved in delivering peer to peer messages and would promote the use of social media to promote the strategy. There are a number of initiatives currently in place which may not be widely known amongst the wider public, such as the Missing People charity's "Textsafe" service and identifying and linking into these would be useful supporting actions.