

A consultation on working together for people who go missing in Scotland



Image is courtesy of the Geographies of Missing People

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*All quotes courtesy of Geographies of Missing People

Consultation questions

Comments on all sections of the draft Strategy are welcome. In particular we are grateful for your response to any or all of the following questions.

Purpose

Our aim is to reduce the harm related to people going missing. This Strategy provides a framework for how organisations can together improve outcomes, and seeks to raise the profile of the issues connected with going missing.

Q1. What are your views on the proposed Purpose of the Strategy?

Definition of Missing

It is recommended that there is a nationally agreed definition of 'missing':

'Anyone whose whereabouts are unknown and:

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

Q2. Are we right to have a national definition?

Q3. What are your comments on the proposed definition above?

General Questions:

Q4. What **works well** in the Strategy?

Q5. What could we **do better or differently** in the Strategy?

Q6. What will be **vital to the implementation and success** of the Strategy?

Q7. Do you see any **challenges** to implementation of the Strategy?

Equality considerations:

The Scottish Government wants to ensure that all members of society are treated equally. As part of this, we need to understand how different people and groups are affected by our policies and consider this when developing our strategies.

Q8. 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)?

Q9. Are there likely to be any negative implications as a result of the strategy, particularly regarding children's wellbeing?

Q10. Are there any other equality issues we should consider?

Commitments:

The Strategy proposes eight commitments structured around four Objectives: Prevent, Respond, Support and Protect. Each Objective has two Commitments and a number of [Supporting Actions](#).

<p><u>Objective 1: Prevent</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commitment 1: Prevention planning takes place for vulnerable individuals and groups.• Commitment 2: Local partnerships include 'missing' within their priorities
<p><u>Objective 2: Respond</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commitment 3: Information about missing people is exchanged between agencies• Commitment 4: Risk assessments are used consistently by agencies responding when someone goes missing.
<p><u>Objective 3: Support</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commitment 5: Return interviews are provided to young people and adults after returning from being missing.• Commitment 6: People are signposted to the appropriate support available.
<p><u>Objective 4: Protect</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commitment 7: Awareness is raised of the issue of going missing• Commitment 8: Links to wider risks are highlighted in training and guidance

Q11. What are your views on the proposed Objectives and Commitments?

Q12. What are the challenges to delivering these Objectives and Commitments?

Q13. What are your views on the Supporting Actions and are there any additional actions that would support delivery of the Strategy?

A consultation on working together for people who go missing in Scotland

What is the purpose of this Strategy?

Our aim is to reduce the harm related to people going missing.

This Strategy provides a framework for how organisations can reduce that harm by working together, and seeks to raise the profile of the issues connected with people going missing. It doesn't propose to create new systems alongside those that already exist, but to ensure that the prevention and handling of missing incidents is incorporated within these existing systems.

In delivering this, the Strategy is focussed on four main objectives:

- **Preventative** measures reduce the number of missing persons incidents.
- **Responding** appropriately to incidents.
- **Supporting** missing people and their families.
- **Protecting** vulnerable people to reduce the risk of harm.

This Strategy proposes a number of commitments that underpin each of those four objectives.

Contribution to National Outcomes

Reducing the harm related to people going missing in Scotland will contribute to many of the National Outcomes in the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework, including:

- We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk.
- Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed.
- Our people are able to maintain their independence as they get older and are able to access appropriate support when they need it.
- We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger.
- Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsible to local people's needs.

Contribution to Local Outcomes

These national outcomes are reflected in local authorities' Single Outcome Agreements, Community Safety priorities, and within Police Scotland's purpose – to improve the safety and wellbeing of people, places and communities in Scotland.

The scale of missing incidents in Scotland – some key facts

what can the evidence* tell us about missing people?

Over **30,000** missing incidents are reported each year

However, many missing incidents are never reported to the police

64% missing incidents involve children and young people

who goes missing?



Around **1 in 3** missing incidents are repeat missing incidents

why do people go missing?

Missing people are often **distressed and vulnerable**, and going missing can be a **sign of harm**

An estimated **40%** of people with **dementia** will go missing

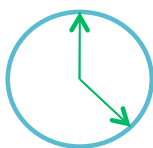
Up to **70%** of **sexually exploited young people** will runaway



Studies show that many adults who go missing have **mental health issues**

Going missing has a **serious impact on missing people and their families.**

what happens when people go missing?



Most missing people **return or are found within 48 hours**

1 in 12 are hurt or harmed

1 in 100 are found dead

1 in 6 young runaways end up **sleeping rough or with strangers**

what works to support missing people?

Prevention planning can help reduce the risk of vulnerable people going missing

Providing **return interviews** to people who have been missing can help identify harm

*The **data available is not definitive** and missing people is a **complex** and **wide-ranging** issue.

What are the implications of people going missing in Scotland?

With over 30,000 incidents of people going missing reported each year, and an unknown number of unreported cases, the scale of “missing” in Scotland is considerable. It is a complex and wide ranging issue and the number of organisations involved, both local and national, is extensive. At a practical level, the high number of missing persons incidents means that the cost to these organisations in time and resources is high.

Missing persons incidents reported range from concerned parents reporting that a young person is late in returning home after a night out, to serious offences where criminality is involved such as abduction, trafficking or murder.

In some instances people choose to leave their lives and make a new start, which they have the right to do.

Most people are found or return safely within 48 hours.

Going missing can be symptomatic of hidden issues. In many cases the underlying cause of going missing is some form of distress, including family breakdown, substance abuse, domestic abuse, bereavement, bullying, exploitation, sexual abuse, and mental health problems.

Sexual exploitation can put young people at risk of running away, and running away makes young people particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation, for example at parties with older peers or adults, or through a survival strategy when rough-sleeping. When exploitation is already occurring, a perpetrator might encourage a young person to run away to be with them, and in some cases running away is a consequence of a disclosure about sexual exploitation.

Going missing can also indicate **forced marriage or human trafficking**. The link between going missing and child trafficking will be explored in the Scottish Government’s new Human Trafficking and Exploitation Strategy.

A high proportion of people who go missing have a **mental health problem**, most frequently depression and anxiety. Adults are more likely to die while missing than children, and are at higher risk of suicide.

Young people who regularly go missing can be an **indicator of poorer future outcomes in life**; for example, they are more likely to be homeless later in life.

Missing is a cause of harm, both to the missing person and to their families and friends. Whilst missing, people may put themselves in dangerous positions, which may lead to them becoming the victims of crime, or they may resort to criminality to survive. For the families and friends left behind, there will be fear and worry, and for some there will also be practical concerns such as financial or domestic arrangements.

What can we do to reduce the risk of harm?

This Strategy is structured around four objectives that reflect the ‘journey’ of a missing incident – **Prevent, Respond, Support and Protect** – and beneath each objective two commitments have been identified, although some will cut across different objectives. Our aim is that through the framework this Strategy provides, partners will collectively agree to delivering change by signing up to those commitments that are relevant to them. Some partner organisations may already be delivering these.

‘Missing’ is a very complex issue without a single solution, and a National Missing Persons Strategy alone cannot solve the range of underlying causes of distress that lead to someone going missing, nor can it prevent criminal acts. It links though to a range of national strategies, legislation, guidance and approaches on the associated issues, such as the existing Child Protection Guidance, the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, the Adult Support and Protection Act, the National Dementia Strategy, and the Children’s Hearing Act ([Annex 1](#) provides a more detailed list.)

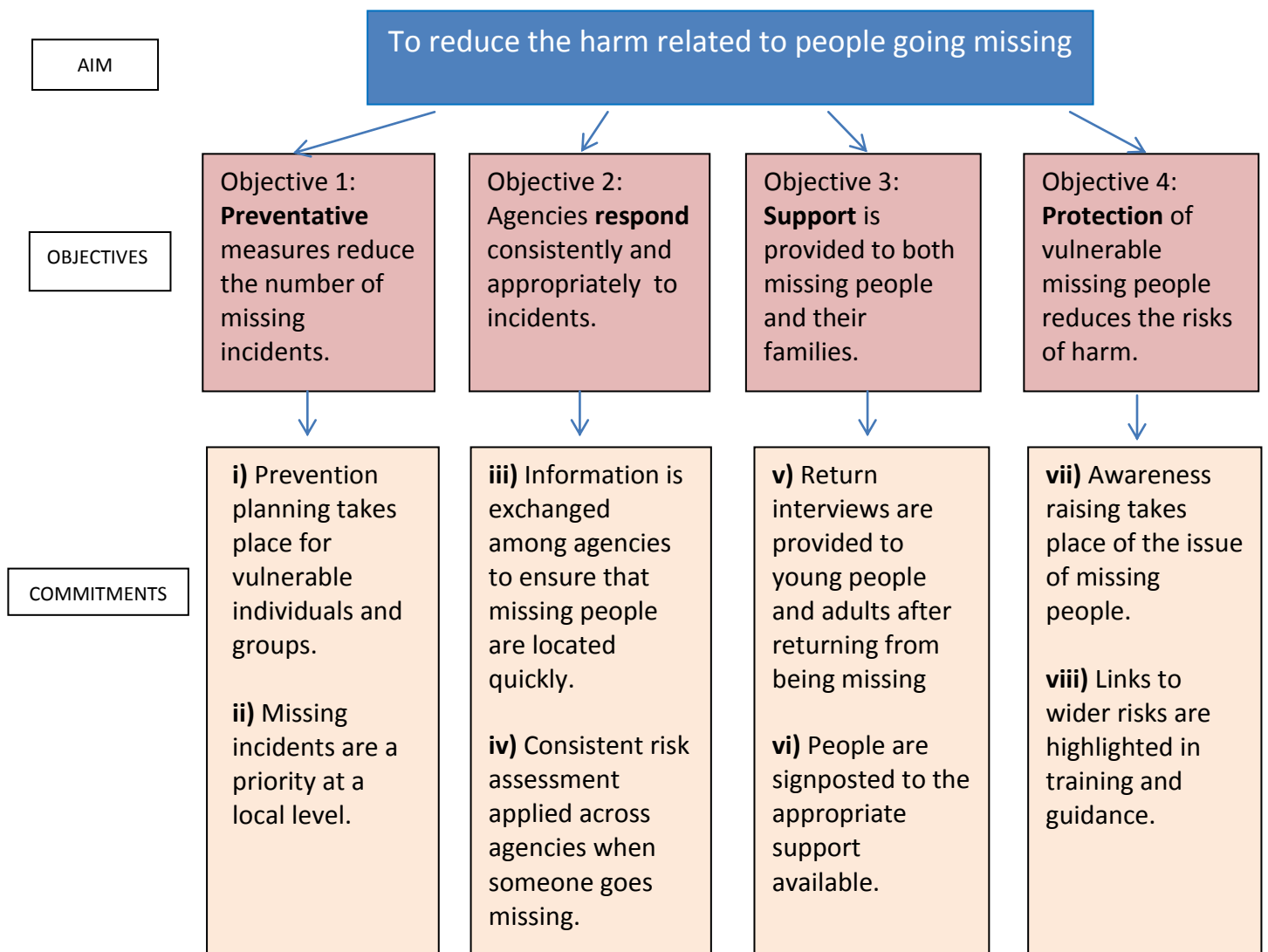
The Strategy doesn’t propose to create new systems alongside those that already exist, but to ensure that the prevention and handling of missing incidents is incorporated within them.

This Strategy can **raise the profile of the scale of ‘missing’ in Scotland and the vulnerabilities of those who do go missing**. It can also provide a national focus for bringing consistent good practice to all aspects of handling incidents, including prevention, the response by an agency if someone does go missing, and the support and protection available to those affected.

A range of organisations are involved in missing person incidents – depending on the circumstances, these may include **local authority social work departments, Police Scotland, housing departments, hospitals, care homes for the elderly, children’s homes, schools, or a range of third sector organisations**. Many incidents go unreported to the police, but may be known to other agencies.

Working successfully in partnership is, therefore, critical in tackling the harm related to people going missing, whether it is by sharing information, jointly prioritising ‘missing’ as an issue, or sharing the same terminology or approach to risk assessment. Such a multi-agency approach is key to many other existing national initiatives such as the integration of health and social care, and Scotland’s GIRFEC approach (Getting It Right for Every Child) with its focus on professionals working together in the best interests of the child or young person. The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 will put GIRFEC on a statutory footing across Scotland from August 2016. Similarly the Adult Support and Protection Code of Practice stresses the need for cooperation and collaboration among agencies.

Four Objectives – Prevent, Respond, Support and Protect



Most of the eight commitments within this Strategy require action at both a national and local level. They don't seek to impose new requirements on local authorities and their partners, but rather look at what can be done within existing resources and through multi-agency partnerships. Given that local circumstances and existing arrangements vary, they are not prescriptive about how the commitments should be delivered, but rather suggest what might be achieved.

The commitments are compatible with recommendations made by HM Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland about the handling of missing persons incidents, and with work underway by Police Scotland and its partners to develop joint protocols about their respective roles and responsibilities when someone in their care goes missing.

Objective 1: Prevent

'I was only allowed half an hour time out from the ward. So I thought if I went down in my slippers, if I buggered off they wouldn't know I was gone and half an hour would give me a good start' (Adam).

Background

Though we cannot solve the many different causes of why someone might go missing, there are ways in which we can help reduce the likelihood, and in particular prevent repeat incidents. The National Crime Agency's analysis of UK missing persons incidents during 2012/13 shows that approximately 38% of all cases reported to the police are repeat incidents, and that children are more likely to go missing on multiple occasions.

Proactively identifying and then supporting vulnerable individuals is key. By understanding and then addressing the reasons why someone goes missing, there is scope to help prevent similar occurrences. With an understanding of the broader local circumstances, combined with a wider understanding supported by this Strategy, the causes of why people go missing can be better tackled.

In some instances, the risks of going missing can be reduced or prevented altogether. Prevention may take different forms, such as care homes for the elderly taking simple measures to help prevent people with dementia wandering and getting lost; or early mediation and support being provided to a young person's family when they are at crisis point. This might include referral to the Reporter where it is thought that compulsory measures of supervision may be required for a child or young person.

There are also strong links across the other three objectives of the Strategy to preventative activity. For example raising awareness of the risks of going missing (commitment 7), providing return interviews (commitment 5), and accessing support which is available (commitment 6).

Case Study: [Shelter's](#) 'Safe and Sound' project

Safe and Sound is an award winning project in Dundee which provides support to young people and their families in helping young runaways to return and stay in the family home. The project's goals are to promote and enhance skills which can reduce risks for young people at risk of homelessness, and to improve communication and conflict resolution through family mediation.

The service – which is a partnership between Shelter Scotland and Relationships Scotland Family Mediation Tayside and Fife – has prevented homelessness amongst some of the most vulnerable young people in the community through supporting over 200 young people and their families since its launch in July 2012.

Police Scotland are working with partners to develop sample Protocols which can be put in place with agencies about incidents of children missing from care, patients who go missing from NHS hospitals, and care home residents with dementia who go missing. These include recommendations for Prevention Plans to be created and the preventative activity which can be taken.

A relatively small number of locations in each local authority area - such as care homes or hospitals - see a disproportionately high number of missing persons incidents, often due to repeat cases. Through building a local picture of who goes missing and where from, an understanding can be built of what 'missing' means in that area. Local agencies can together build an assessment of the local 'missing' picture to identify these locations (see Commitment 3) which can support understanding of underlying issues.

Commitment 1: Prevention planning takes place for vulnerable individuals and groups.

For vulnerable children and adults, person-centred planning to support and safeguard their wellbeing is built in to existing frameworks. The GIRFEC approach, and the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, ensures that Child's Plans are put in place when targeted intervention is required to meet a wellbeing need, and in some instances going missing may be a trigger to having a Child's Plan first put in place. For vulnerable adults, support and protection case conferences take place and for those in care, Placement Plans are put in place.

Within this context, when agencies undertake assessments of vulnerable people's support and care needs, planning for the prevention of missing incidents should be built into this process. Such planning should make an early judgement about whether they are likely to go missing, the consequent risks, and actions identified which might reduce that likelihood. This applies equally to a young person arriving in a care setting, an asylum seeker trafficked into Scotland, a person with dementia moving into a care home, or a patient with mental illness being admitted to hospital. The actions taken will differ according to the person and circumstance, but the principle remains the same.

Where possible, the vulnerable person (or their parent/carer) should have an opportunity to contribute to the assessment and their views taken into consideration. The assessment should include whether there have been previous incidents of going missing and what the triggers were, the likelihood of any exploitation or harm coming to them, any external influences which may be a 'pull' factor, a judgement about the likelihood of a missing incident, and what actions will be taken in the event that they do go missing.

An early assessment also provides an opportunity to provide links to wider support that may be available, and to provide advice about the implications of going missing. Information can also be captured that might be used by police in a search situation.

Wider prevention planning for groups of people can also be developed. This might for example take the form of targeting people within key locations, or providing information to young people about the support available to them, using educational materials in school (see also commitment 7), or providing families of people with dementia with information about how to prevent a missing incident.

Commitment 2: Missing incidents are a priority at a local level.

Because going missing is an indicator of other distress or harm, increasing the profile of missing incidents at a local partnership level supports the wider support systems already in place. Through better data sharing and intelligence held by a range of agencies, local partnerships can build and maintain an oversight of the scale of nature of missing incidents in the local area, which will then inform preventative activity.

Police Scotland can provide local analysis of their incident data showing the pattern of incidents including location, time, and who is going missing. This can be combined with other sources such as local authorities' information on missing incidents from care homes, or third sector organisations' intelligence on un-reported missing, in order to build a rich picture of who goes missing, from where, and why.

The importance of this partnership approach is already established by both Child and Adult Protection Guidance which stresses the importance of collaboration and of multi-agency working. Establishing a local framework allows agencies to best safeguard vulnerable people in their area, and to jointly tackle the issue.

Local circumstances will differ, but existing structures such as Community Planning Partnerships or Community Safety Partnerships might provide a suitable forum to drive this forward, and both harm prevention and the protection of vulnerable people will often already be reflected in local Single Outcome Agreements in different ways. This could be taken forward through the following:

- Development of local strategies - using this national Strategy as a framework - which set out the commitments made and how these will be actioned by partners at that local level.
- At an operational level, regular liaison between key organisations – bringing together Police Scotland's Divisional missing persons lead with social work, child and adult protection committee leads, NHS, third sector partners, education and housing.
- Identification of a Missing Persons 'champion' within the partnership.

'Prevention' objective - Summary of supporting actions

Scottish Government	Coordinate development of sample prevention planning
Local authorities	Lead partner in local multi-agency partnerships Ensure prevention planning takes place for children and adults in care Local Protocols agreed with Police Scotland regarding children missing from care, and people with dementia going missing from care
NHS Health Boards	Ensure prevention planning takes place for patients at risk of going missing Local Protocols agreed with Police Scotland Partner in local multi-agency partnerships
Police Scotland	Provides local analysis and data for partners about missing incidents Lead partner in local multi-agency partnerships Coordinate development of Protocols regarding children missing from care, NHS patients going missing, and people going missing from care homes
Local partnership	Includes 'missing' as a priority at strategic level, for example Community Planning Partnership or Community Safety Partnership Local Missing Persons Strategy developed Champion for 'missing' identified Identifies target groups for preventative activity Operational partnership group established with Police Scotland, Local Authority leads, NHS leads and third sector.

Objective 2: Respond

'I was thinking 'how long will it be before they report me missing?' 'Cause my bus, I left there about half past one and my bus didn't leave till 6 o'clock and I'm not normally out all day so I thought they might think something is up.
(Agnes)

'I kept thinking if I go get on a bus somewhere half the buses now have CCTV, so they'll know where I'm going. So that's why I started walking. No one will know where I'm going, they can't follow me' (Trish).

Background

When someone goes missing, the response to that incident is critical. A judgement needs to be made about the most appropriate response through sound risk assessment. Both the police and the reporting agencies (when involved) need to have an agreed position on the point at which other agency involvement is appropriate. In some circumstances it may be appropriate for agencies to judge a person in their care is 'absent' rather than missing. Examples include a young person staying out later than an agreed time, but where the care worker is aware of their location, in communication with them, and has no concerns about their wellbeing.

Where a decision is made to inform the police, the reporting professionals and the police need to have a mutual understanding about the language that is being used around that risk level, so they can act appropriately. Information needs to be shared so that there is sufficient intelligence to locate that person as quickly as possible.

Three Protocols are being developed by Police Scotland and its partner organisations that agree the response taken by agencies involved in three different circumstances:

- Looked-after children who go missing from residential or foster care.
- Adults who go missing from care homes in Scotland.
- Patients who go missing from NHS Care in Scotland.

Each of these Protocols will include prevention planning but importantly also the different roles and responsibilities of agencies when someone goes missing.

Case Study: Child Rescue Alert

The [Missing People](#) charity, the National Crime Agency and Groupcall operate a Child Rescue Alert system, which sends out alerts when a child has been abducted or their life is thought to be at risk. Texts or emails are sent to people who have signed up to receive the alerts. www.childrescuealert.org.uk

The system is based on the 'Amber Alerts' pioneered in the USA after 9-year-old Amber Hagerman was abducted and murdered in Texas in 1996. In Europe, the Netherlands have adopted this system and over two million people are registered to receive an Alert message.

Commitment 3: Information about missing people is exchanged among agencies.

Appropriate and proportionate information-sharing is important in several respects – in the handling of live cases, in building a picture of someone’s history and vulnerabilities, and in understanding local patterns. This commitment builds on both the first and second commitments – about prevention planning, and on taking a partnership approach – and is important in undertaking risk assessments (commitment 4).

At present, missing persons incidents which are reported to the police generate a ‘Risk and Concern’ form, which is then shared with partners. A range of agencies may hold important information which can be used to ensure an appropriate response is made in the event someone goes missing. This might for example be about health issues, previous instances of going missing, or concerns about abuse or exploitation, which will have been captured in their prevention plans (commitment 1).

Where child protection concerns are raised, there are existing processes which require joint information sharing, intelligence gathering and decision making between police, the local authority and other core agencies. The Children and Young People Act makes available a Named Person for children from 0–18, or older if still in school. The Named Person will have a key role in ensuring that information about a child or young person’s wellbeing is appropriately recorded and shared when there are concerns about a missing incident. Local Authorities will want to ensure that the guidance they provide to Named Persons and Lead Professionals includes information on that role.

In some instances, third sector organisations will also have information which can provide a further angle, for example about a history of a young person running away from home which has not been reported to the police. Similarly, different agencies may compile their own data about missing incidents which should be shared/aggregated. For example incidents where young people go missing from care are currently reported to the Care Inspectorate.

Adopting the local partnership approach described in commitment 2 – particularly at an operational level – builds communication channels between agencies, and provides a forum within which such information can be appropriately shared. Local partnerships will need to establish an appropriate information sharing protocol to enable working together, as there can be a number of barriers within processes or systems to effectively sharing information including data protection responsibilities around handling sensitive and personal information.

Commitment 4: Risk assessments are used consistently by agencies responding when someone goes missing.

At present a range of different methods of assessment are used by agencies to determine the level of risk when someone goes missing. Police Scotland use 'low', 'medium' or 'high'; other agencies who are involved in incidents such as people going missing from care homes or hospitals may use other labels such as 'green', 'amber' or 'red'. It is important that professionals in different settings need to be able to communicate clearly to each other, and ensure that the most appropriate action is taken. Local partnerships will want to consider how agencies are applying risk assessments to ensure a common understanding, and where appropriate agree a joint risk assessment takes place.

More fundamentally, there is at times a mismatch between definitions of 'missing'. This has been highlighted by a report by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland about local policing in Aberdeen City which recommends the development of common partnership definitions for missing people that can be agreed and adopted by multi-agency partners across Scotland. The Scottish Government will take forward this work to reach consensus on what 'missing' means.

At times someone's absence may be assessed as being such low risk that they can be treated as 'absent' rather than missing, and so there is no need to engage with the police unless circumstances change. Examples include situations where a young person in care does not return at the agreed time, but care staff know where they are and have no concerns about their well-being.

'Response' objective - Summary of supporting actions

Scottish Government	Promote Child Rescue Alert across Scottish organisations Coordinate an agreed definition of 'missing' with partners
Local authorities	Local protocols agreed with Police Scotland regarding children missing from care, and people going missing from care Clear guidance for Named Persons/Lead Professionals on their role when children go missing/or at risk of going missing
NHS Health Boards	Local protocols agreed with Police Scotland about incidents where patients go missing
Police Scotland	Coordinate development of Protocols regarding children missing from care, NHS patients going missing, and people going missing from care homes
Local partnership	Operational partnership group establishes information sharing protocol/agreement Coordinates understanding of risk assessment across agencies

Objective 3: Support

He made it very easy for me to relax a little and talk to them and we spoke about other things that helped. I think that all has to contribute to my getting better' (Sophie).

'Everybody wants you to explain yourself and I couldn't. For days afterwards I was still the same so, you know, it was on the verge sort of 'I can still walk out' I still threaten it' (Trish).

Background

Going missing is both a symptom and a cause of distress – for missing people, and for their friends and families. It is important that those who are affected by missing incidents are provided support at what is often a crisis point. This support may be needed at different stages – while someone is missing, or on their return when the underlying causes of going missing might still be present.

In some cases those underlying issues are already being addressed; a young person may already be under Child Protection for example, or an adult already identified as at risk of harm under the Adult Support Protection Act. But for other people – such as children running away from home for the first time - going missing may be the first indication that there are problems. In those circumstances it is important that there is an opportunity to identify those issues, and then signpost people to the appropriate support available. There can be both 'push' and 'pull' factors at play when someone goes missing – they may be running away from something, but equally they may be running towards something.

The Children's Hearings System is designed to protect vulnerable children and young people. Where the Reporter considers compulsory measures of supervision may be necessary to keep a child or young person safe, either from themselves or others, the case will be referred to the Children's Panel to make a decision on the most appropriate measures to be taken. In some circumstances, the risks associated with going missing may be the trigger which leads to the Hearings System being used.

People who go missing are at risk of rough sleeping or making other risky decisions about where to spend the night. The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 provides local authorities with powers to provide short-term refuge for children or young people who appear to be at risk of harm and who request refuge. At present there is no dedicated emergency accommodation available for young people in Scotland.

For the families of those who are missing, practical information is available from the National Missing Persons Bureau which has developed a range of factsheets. The Missing People charity (see case study below) also provides support services across the UK including a free 24/7 helpline.

Where a person is missing for a long-time there can be practical implications for family members, such as having to manage finances such as mortgages. In

Scotland the Accountant of Court can grant Judicial Factors 'in loco absentis', which provide control over the missing persons' affairs, including finances. These powers are rarely used, which could indicate a lack of awareness, which this Strategy can help address.

Commitment 5: Return interviews are provided to young people and adults after returning from being missing.

Speaking with people after they return is an important way of understanding the reasons why they went and any harm they may have come to, or still be at risk of. They can then be directed to the appropriate support available, and information which is gathered from them can inform the prevention of a repeat incident.

The benefits of providing return interviews are widely recognised. Currently the provision of return interviews varies substantially depending on local circumstances. Sometimes a local authority service such as Housing will carry out an interview for its own purposes, but may not share the information gathered more widely. In Aberdeen and Fife, Police Scotland has officers whose specific role is to carry out informal interviews, who have developed considerable expertise. In other areas, third sector organisations including Barnardos and Shelter provide an interview service on behalf of the police or local authority.

The Children and Young People Act makes available a Named Person for children from age 0–18, or older if still in school. In some cases the Named Person may be the appropriate individual to speak to the child on their return, or to signpost the child or family to another service for this support. Where a child is looked after, or has a Child's Plan due to other wellbeing needs, the Lead Professional will have the key role in coordinating support for the child.

Local circumstances differ, as do individual cases, so it may not be appropriate for there to be a uniform method of delivering interviews, nor a single organisation to deliver them. The Scottish Government will coordinate the development of good practice guidance and examples that draw out the areas key to providing successful interviews. In broad terms, return interviews should ask about:

- the reasons for going missing
- what happened, including where they went, and who with
- any harm experienced
- what could help prevent them going missing again.

Appropriate support should be provided, for example, through the attendance of a caregiver or communication aids, and contact information for the interviewer should be given so that follow up contact and support can be sought. Information gathered should be shared with the agencies concerned including police, local authority, and the Named Person or Lead Professional if a child in care. Disclosures that are made about criminality or harm should be actioned accordingly. Where children are being interviewed, the Scottish Government Guidance on Joint Investigative Interviewing of Child Witnesses should be referred to.

Two Case Studies: Return Interviews

In **Aberdeen City, Police Scotland** has a dedicated return-interview officer who is based in a Community Safety Hub. The trained officer reviews missing person cases involving young people and identifies where a return interview is needed. The officer works out of uniform and arranges meetings in a location where the interviewee can be comfortable and best supported. She proactively provides support and builds relationships where possible, not only with the young person concerned, but directly with local care homes. As a result she has successfully broken down the barriers which can sometimes exist between young people and the police.

The **Safer Choices service in Renfrewshire** is a partnership established in 2012 between Barnardo's Scotland and Police Scotland to reduce incidents of young people going missing from home and care, and reduce the risk of sexual exploitation and other crime. The service provides a rapid response to problems such as disengagement from school and offending, and provides return interviews after a young person returns from being missing. The interviews identify the trigger points to help develop effective coping mechanisms. They also help young people manage risky situations identify the support available to them, and assess the risk of harm and the likelihood of any future episodes of missing from home or care.

The impact has been a reduced frequency and duration of missing incidents, an increase in young people's understanding of the risks and how to keep themselves safe. Barnardo's approach to return interviews is to ensure they are effective in both information gathering and providing an opportunity for the young person to talk about the circumstances of the missing episode from their own perspective.

Commitment 6: People are signposted to the appropriate support available

Because going missing touches on a wide range of issues in people's lives, there will often be a range of local voluntary organisations that may be able to offer support to people with specific needs. There are also larger national organisations who offer their services across the country, such as Missing People, Barnardos, the Samaritans, and Shelter Scotland. Police Scotland have, for example, been working with Missing People so that they can better signpost people directly to the support that they offer to families and missing people.

At a local level, frontline practitioners need to be able to quickly signpost people to sources of support, and local partnerships may need to undertake scoping exercises of the support available.

Case Study: Missing People charity

Missing People is a UK charity that provides a free, confidential 24/7 helpline offering practical and emotional support for missing children and adults and for the families left behind. A new national #SaySomething Reporting Helpline has been launched in 2015 which young people can use to report concerns about sexual exploitation and get support. All Missing People's services are delivered by experienced and accredited staff and volunteers and can be accessed for free by calling or texting 116 000, or emailing 116000@missingpeople.org.uk. The charity also provides a wide range of online information and guidance for missing people, for families left behind and for professionals at www.missingpeople.org.uk

Missing People also provide a publicity appeal service to gather vital information from the public when someone is missing and considered to be vulnerable. With consent from the police and the family, they disseminate a tailored publicity appeal through 120,000 social media followers, national and local media partners, and a national network of digital advertising billboards. They are also able to offer commissioned services such as return interviews and follow-up support for children and adults after a missing incident.

'Support' objective - Summary of supporting actions

Scottish Government	Raise awareness of Judicial Factors Coordinate development of return interview guidance and reporting
Local authorities	Ensure adults and young people receive a return interview Review the provision of emergency accommodation for young people
NHS Health Boards	Ensure patients receive a return interview
Police Scotland	Highlight support available to those affected by missing incidents
Local partnership	Review local third sector support services available
Wider partners	Third sector organisations build awareness of support services available

Objective 4: Protect

'I got there they started to inhale heroin and I have never ever seen that before. I didn't know where I was, they locked the front door and they wouldn't let me out. Then I ended up jumping out the window trying to get away' (Jasmine).

Background

As described above, many people who go missing are already vulnerable, and whilst missing they are at increased risk of harm and criminality. People can put themselves at risk by staying with strangers, and becoming victims of crime or exploitation. The links between going missing and sexual exploitation, trafficking, forced marriage and abuse are widely recognised. Recent research has highlighted that children and young people experiencing gang involvement and going missing are at particular risk of sexual exploitation and serious violence.

The commitments below seek to ensure that the risks related to going missing are highlighted to professionals, those at most risk, and more widely to the public.

Commitment 7: Awareness is raised of the issue of going missing

To many people, both professionals and the public, the scale of 'missing' in Scotland is a surprise, and the links with vulnerabilities and harm are sometimes unknown. By raising the profile of missing, this Strategy can help build a better awareness of those who are at risk of going missing, and of the risks that they in turn face. For those people who are not connected to services or agencies but are in distress, it is important that their families, friends and colleagues may be alert to the signs. For the range of professionals who may be involved while someone is experiencing difficulties, it is important that they too are alert to the likelihood of them going missing.

The Scottish Government will ensure that, where appropriate, messaging about 'missing' is included in wider public campaigns – for example those about trafficking, sexual exploitation, or mental health. We will give this Strategy maximum impact through an implementation strategy, a national online presence, and by continuing to build links with partner organisations tackling 'missing'.

At a local level, awareness raising can be included within local strategies (see commitment 2) by local partnerships, and key groups or locations targeted. It is important that awareness is raised amongst young people about the risks of running away, and that both adults and children are aware of how to get help if they are thinking about going missing.

Commitment 8: Links to wider risks are highlighted in training and guidance

Issues such as child sexual exploitation and human trafficking are being tackled through legislation and national action between Scottish Government and partners, and it will be important that these make reference to 'missing' being a possible signifier of harm. The guidance being developed to support the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 will also, where appropriate, need to reference this, as will future programmes of learning and development opportunities for those working in the care sector.

There will also be a wide range of existing relevant guidance and training for professionals, at both a national and local level. Some of this already references the links with going missing – such as the National Guidance for Child Protection described below. There are also some materials which are specifically relevant to going missing – for example training materials on Young Runaways prepared by the Scottish Coalition for Young Runaways, and an e-learning package developed by Police Scotland about handling missing incidents. The Scottish Government will work with these partners to explore how these materials might be updated as appropriate and used more widely as a resource by agencies. Local partnerships can identify opportunities for shared learning and training to develop local relationships and shared understanding.

Case Study: National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland – Children and Young People who are Missing

The national child protection guidance sets out a national framework to help shape local child protection practices and procedures. It aims to improve the way all professionals and organisations work together to give children the protection they need, quickly and effectively at the earliest possible stage. It also highlights the shared responsibility of agencies and services have for protecting children and safeguarding their welfare.

Sections 618-625 of the guidance covers children missing from statutory services, home or from care, and describes their vulnerabilities and the possible causes of going missing. “Local areas should consider a strategic multi-agency collaborative framework, including relevant third sector agencies and independent schools, to support individual agency procedures for responding to, and tracking, missing children. Collaborative inter-agency and cross-boundary working is crucial in missing children situations. Guidance needs to be clear on specific procedures to be followed for those missing from home and those missing from care, as agencies have specific statutory responsibilities in respect of children missing from local authority care.”

'Protect' objective - Summary of supporting actions

Scottish Government	Ensure messages about the risks of going missing are included in relevant national guidance and training Identify opportunities to includes message in wider public campaigns Review existing national training materials Support development of education resources
Local authorities	Ensure messages about the risks of going missing are included in relevant local guidance and training
NHS Health Boards	Ensure messages about the risks of going missing are included in relevant guidance and training
Police Scotland	Explore opportunities to share learning resources such as e-learning package
Local partnership	Identify opportunities for shared learning and training

Summary of supporting actions

	1. Prevention	2. Response	3. Support	4. Protection
Scottish Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate development of sample prevention planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote Child Rescue Alert across Scottish organisations Coordinate an agreed definition of 'missing' with partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness of Judicial Factors Coordinate development of return interview guidance and reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure messages about the risks of going missing are included in relevant national guidance and training Identify opportunities to include message in wider public campaigns Review existing national training materials Support development of education resources
Local authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead partner in local multi-agency partnerships Ensure prevention planning takes place for children and adults in care Local Protocols agreed with Police Scotland regarding children missing from care, and people with dementia going missing from care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local protocols agreed with Police Scotland regarding children missing from care, and people going missing from care Clear guidance for Named Persons/Lead Professionals on their role when children go missing/or at risk of going missing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure adults and young people receive a return interview Review provision of emergency accommodation for young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure messages about the risks of going missing are included in relevant local guidance and training
NHS Health Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure prevention planning takes place for patients at risk of going missing Local Protocols agreed with Police Scotland Partner in local multi-agency partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local protocols agreed with Police Scotland about incidents where patients go missing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure patients receive a return interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure messages about the risks of going missing are included in relevant guidance and training

<p>Police Scotland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides local analysis and data for partners about missing incidents • Lead partner in local multi-agency partnerships • Coordinate development of Protocols regarding children missing from care, NHS patients going missing, and people going missing from care homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate development of Protocols regarding children missing from care, NHS patients going missing, and people going missing from care homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight support available to those affected by missing incidents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore opportunities to share learning resources such as e-learning package
<p>Local partnership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes 'missing' as a priority at strategic level, for example Community Planning Partnership or Community Safety Partnership • Local Missing Persons Strategy developed • Champion for 'missing' identified • Identifies target groups for preventative activity • Operational partnership group established with Police Scotland, Local Authority leads, NHS leads and third sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational partnership group establishes information sharing protocol/agreement • Coordinates understanding of risk assessment across agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review local third sector support services available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify opportunities for shared learning and training
<p>Wider partners</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third sector organisations build awareness of support services available 	

Implementation

[A full implementation plan will be developed taking into account responses received to this Consultation.]

Annex 1: Related legislation, strategies, guidance and approaches

<p>Legislation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Bill • Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 • Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 • Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 • Homelessness (Scotland) Act 2003 • UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991) • Equality Act 2010 • Children’s Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 • Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Offences Bill 	<p>Approaches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting it Right for Every Child (2012) • Regional Housing Options Hubs • Scottish Government Building Safer Communities Programme • Domestic Abuse Disclosure Scheme
<p>Policies and strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health Strategy for Scotland (2012-15) • Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group Workplan • Suicide Prevention Strategy 2013-16 • National Dementia Strategy 2013-16 • Reshaping Care for Older People • Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan • Keys for Life Learning Disability Strategy for Scotland • Child Poverty Strategy 2014-17 • Preventing Offending: Getting it right for Children and Young People 2015-2020 • Equally Safe: Scotland’s strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls (2014) • Human Trafficking Strategy • Equally Well (2008) 	<p>Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Options Guidance • National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2014) • Getting our Priorities Right (2013) • Children Missing from Education Service

Annex 2: Data and research on ‘missing’

National Crime Agency. Missing Persons: data and analysis 2012/13

Stevenson, O. Parr, H. Woolnough, P. Fyfe, N. (2013). *Geographies of Missing People: Processes, Experiences, Responses*. (Glasgow: The University of Glasgow).
<http://www.geographiesofmissingpeople.org.uk/>

Home Office: Missing Children and Adults, a Cross-Government Strategy (2011)

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland: Local Policing+ Inspection of the Approach to Missing Person Investigations in Aberdeen City Division (2015)

All-Party Parliamentary Group for Runaway and Missing Children and Adults and the APPG for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. (2012) *Report from the Joint Inquiry Into Children Who Go Missing From Care*.

APPG Inquiry: *Support for Families for Missing People, Report with recommendations* (2011)

Home Office. *The Missing Persons Taskforce: A report with recommendations for improving the multi-agency response to missing person incidents*. (2010)

Public Petitions Committee Report on tackling child sexual exploitation in Scotland, Scottish Parliament (2014)

Shelter Scotland: Running away and future homelessness – the missing link? (2011)

Missing People information and statistics factsheets;
<http://www.missingpeople.org.uk/about-us/about-the-issue/information-statistics/75-missingfamilies2.html>

Police Scotland – Missing People Standard Operating Procedure and Aide Memoire

The Children’s Society: Still Running 3 (2011)

Annex 3: Developing the Strategy

From the outset, development of this strategy has been through collaboration. Both a Working Group and a Steering Group were formed by the Scottish Government in 2014 to take this work forward, with membership drawn from a range of stakeholders including Police Scotland, academics, charities such as Missing People, Shelter Scotland and Barnardos, local authority representatives and organisations including the Mental Welfare Commission. The expertise of a wide range of partners has been vital, including the National Missing Persons Bureau and the Home Office, and we will continue to rely on partnership working across agencies, at local and national levels.

Early in 2015 a Proposition Paper provided stakeholders with a draft of the Strategy to get their views on the proposals. The feedback received to this, including from young people affected by running away, then informed further drafting.

National Missing Persons Steering Group

Members are drawn from a cross section of sectors, including voluntary organisations, local authorities, private care sector, Police Scotland, Health, and Scottish Government. The Group's remit is to provide a critical steer, expert knowledge and advice, and to help make connections between the diverse range of cross-cutting issues.

Scottish Government Missing Persons Working Group

Members are drawn from Scottish Government policy leads on a range of relevant issues, including child protection, homelessness, elderly care, and education. Police Scotland's Missing Persons Unit also attend, and academics from the Geographies of Missing People project.

A consultation on working together for people who go missing in Scotland

1. Purpose of this consultation

This consultation seeks views from individuals and organisations, across sectors, on how we can protect vulnerable people and reduce the harm associated with going missing in Scotland. It has been produced by the Scottish Government, with input from a wide range of partners.

2. Responding to this consultation paper

Responses should reach us by **30 November 2015**. Earlier responses would be welcome.

Please complete your response using the online system at <http://www.gov.scot.Consultations/Current> or send your response with the completed **Respondent Information Form** (see below) to:

WorkingTogether@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Or:

Katherine Byrne
Safer Communities Directorate
Scottish Government
1WR St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

If you have any queries then please contact us on 0131 244 4626.

This consultation, and all other Scottish Government consultation exercises, can be viewed online on the consultation web pages of the Scottish Government website at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/consultations>.

Handling your response

We need to know how you wish your response to be handled and, in particular, whether you are happy for your response to be made public. Please complete the consultation online at <http://www.gov.scot/Consultations/Current> or complete and return the **Respondent Information Form** as this will ensure that we treat your response appropriately. If you ask for your response not to be published we will regard it as confidential, and we will treat it accordingly.

All respondents should be aware that the Scottish Government are subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and would, therefore, have to consider any request made to it under the Act for information relating to responses made to this consultation exercise.

Next steps in the process

Where respondents have given permission for their response to be made public and after we have checked that they contain no potentially defamatory material, the consultation will be made available to the public in the Scottish Government Library and on the Scottish Government consultation web pages. You can make arrangements to view responses by contacting the SG Library on 0131 244 4552. Responses can be copied and sent to you, but a charge may be made for this service.

What happens next?

Following the closing date, all responses will be analysed and considered along with any other available evidence to help us reach a decision on the questions contained in the consultation. We will analyse responses to support the completion of the strategy, which will be published in 2016.

Impact Assessments

This consultation will allow us to gather information and evidence to inform the development and subsequent publication of the required Impact Assessments.

Comments and complaints

If you have any comments about how this consultation exercise has been conducted, please send them to the contact details above.

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

Title Mr Ms Mrs Miss Dr Please tick as appropriate

Surname

Forename

2. Postal Address

Postcode	Phone	Email

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

(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

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

(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



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