



Protocol

**on the Sharing of Information between agencies in Dundee
about Children and Families who are Missing**

INTRODUCTION

A number of agencies in Dundee have systems in place whereby they alert similar agencies in Scotland or the UK when a child and/or family about whom there are concerns goes missing. These agencies also have systems in place to receive 'Missing Person' notices from agencies elsewhere in the country.

The agencies that have these systems in place in Dundee are NHS Tayside, Education, Social Work and Tayside Police.

What does not exist is a comprehensive system whereby the agencies in Dundee inform each other that they have noted a child and/or family about whom there is concern is missing, or that they have received a notice from colleagues elsewhere in the country.

This protocol addresses that issue.

The purposes for which the sharing of information between agencies in Dundee should take place are:

- to notify other agencies who may be involved, but may not yet be aware, that the child or family is missing,
- to establish if any other agency has information as to the child's or family's whereabouts,
- to notify agencies who may have contact with the child or family, so that they can then advise the alerting agency of that contact and of information they may have about the child's or family's whereabouts.

The individuals / families identified in this document are those that remain missing from agencies for a concerning period of time, as opposed to individuals whose 'missing' category is such that the circumstances suggest that they will be missing for a short time only. Examples of this would be children who fail to return home at appointed times.

In such circumstances Community Safety Wardens from Dundee City Council's Leisure & Communities Department are made available to be deployed by the police in the search area. The withdrawal of wardens from designated patrol areas for this purpose has the approval of elected members and the CS Wardens Advisory Group.

A DUTY TO SHARE INFORMATION

The Scottish Executive intends to issue a Code of Practice that will govern what and how information is shared between agencies in Scotland. Until that happens, the responsibility to share information is based on professional guidance¹.

THE THRESHOLD FOR SHARING INFORMATION

The information that must be shared between agencies in Dundee is 'Child Protection Information'. A definition of this is, "... information relating to a child which the holder of information considers, or should reasonably consider, to be relevant for the purposes of protecting the child, or any other child, from harm."

¹ Sharing Information about Children at Risk - A Guide to Good Practice. Scottish Executive, 2003

The agencies covered by this protocol commit to applying professional judgement in deciding whether information about a child or family being missing should be shared with other agencies in Dundee. The above test does not require that a child has already been deemed to be at risk of significant harm via a Child Protection Case Conference. It requires that professionals consider whether the information (i.e. the child being missing and, if known, the whereabouts of the child) is relevant to protecting the child from harm.

Until such time as the Code of Practice provides further information, agencies and the professionals within them, must be mindful of the obligations currently placed upon them by statute, policy or regulatory authority. This may cause a conflict. All relevant agencies in Dundee are committed to the principle of the welfare of the child being paramount and will operate under it, within the bounds of current legislation.

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

The primary departments upon which this protocol will impact are Education, Social Work and Housing. However, there are other departments which may have, be able to access, or may receive information about a family's whereabouts; e.g. Leisure & Communities, Finance. These departments should establish procedures for receiving 'Missing Person' notices and responding appropriately.

For the purposes of this protocol, Council departments other than Education, Housing and Social Work should understand that the social work department undertakes a lead role whenever a child is considered to be in need of protection. In order to keep the lines of communication within the Council as straightforward as possible, social work will be the agency responsible for the decision to issue a notice to these other departments, and for doing so. This means that if the Education Department initiates the distribution of a notice, it will be for social work to decide upon the need for that to be passed to, for example, Finance Department, using the criteria below.

When such a notice is received from the social work department, all other departments should consider that it has been issued because of concern about the safety of a child. Any information they have, can obtain, or may receive about the whereabouts of the child or family would be "...relevant for the purposes of protecting the child, or any other child, from harm." They should, therefore, make this information available to the post holder named on the notice received.

TAYSIDE POLICE

Management of missing person's cases within the police service means that the process for handling of information differs from that in other local agencies. If a police force issues a Missing Person notice, that force remains in charge of the overall effort to locate that person across the UK.

If a Missing Person notice is received from another area, the police force in the area from which the notice came will have been informed if appropriate. In which case, for policing purposes, that force will remain in charge of the operation and will alert other forces as necessary. Local agencies do not need to alert Tayside Police unless there is information that suggests the missing persons may be in Dundee.

When a local agency decides to alert other Dundee agencies that a child or family is missing, it should discuss, with Sergeant of the Family Protection Unit or, in their absence, the Force Control Room, of Tayside Police, the appropriateness of asking Tayside Police to formally consider the case as a 'Missing Person'.

NHS TAYSIDE

In July 2006, the Scottish Executive supported a pilot across NHS Scotland for the distribution of alerts for families missing from a known address where there were concerns about any child in these families.

The person in each Health Board area nominated to issue such alerts is the Nurse Consultant or the Senior Nurse for Child Protection. The Nurse Consultant receives Missing Family alerts from other Health Board areas and decides where within health, these should be distributed. As a result collaboration across agencies has taken place in order to make sure other Agencies are aware of such Missing Family concerns.

The Nurse Consultant within each Health Board area has the responsibility for distributing to other Health Board areas when such a family is identified as missing. These families are described as having professional concerns "of significant harm" for the children in respect of unmet need, vulnerability or abuse, this includes risks to unborn children.

Devolved responsibility for raising these alerts has been given from the Caldicott Guardians within each of the Departments of NHS Tayside and the Nurse Consultant has the responsibility to raise these Missing Family alerts within NHS Tayside in all but exceptional circumstances with that devolved authority.

THE PROCESS

Nominated Officers

Each agency will identify a post within their agency responsible for the management of missing person information flowing between agencies. Each will advise the others, via the CYPPC, of the contact information of the post holder. This person will have the key role in the management of missing person information within their agency. This person will:

- a. issue missing person notices from their agency to the other local agencies.
- b. review the status of their missing person notice at agreed intervals (see below).
- c. inform the other local agencies when the status of the notice changes; e.g. is withdrawn.
- d. receive missing person notices from any of the other local agencies, record it on internal systems and make a decision about issuing a notice to colleagues elsewhere in the country.
- e. receive missing person notices from colleagues elsewhere in the country and decide upon the need to pass the information on to other local agencies.

Issuing Notices

When one agency decides that it is appropriate to issue a Missing Person/Family notice to colleagues elsewhere in the country, it should also consider informing the agencies in Dundee covered by this Protocol.

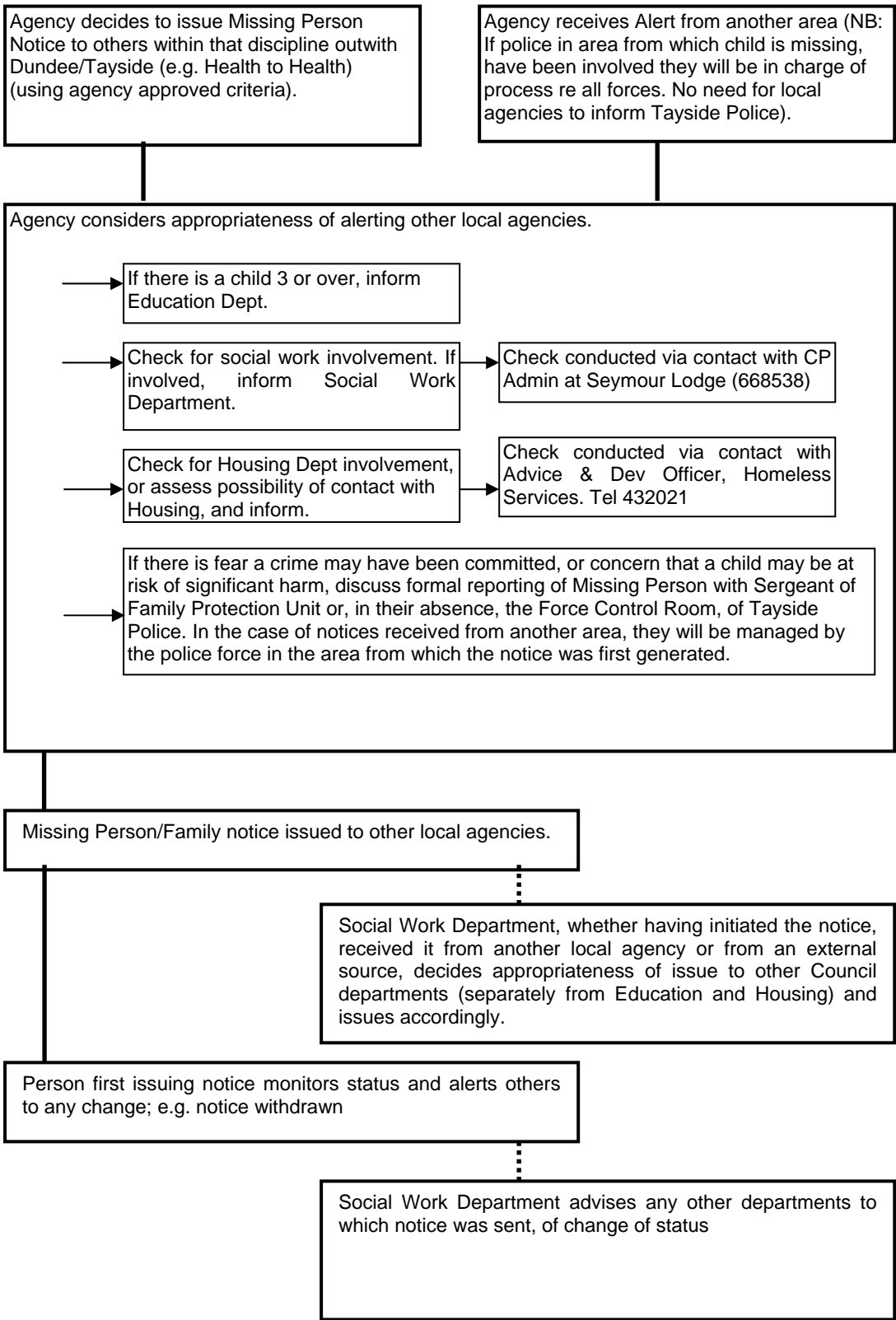
Reviewing Notices

The status of missing person notices should be reviewed every 3 months.

Once a missing person has been found, the officer initiating the missing person notice should ensure that other agencies that received the original notice are given notice that it should be withdrawn.

The responsible officer in each agency should establish an administrative system that alerts him or her when a notice they have issued is 3 months old. If there is any change in the status of the notice, the responsible officer should provide information to those who received the original notice.

Each agency should establish an administrative system to amend/withdraw missing person information that it will have entered on electronic databases.



Inter-agency Missing Child/Family Initial Notice



Date of Notice	
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In accordance with the Dundee CYPPC Protocol on the Sharing of Information between agencies in Dundee about Children and Families who are Missing, the following information is brought to your attention.

Any information you have, can obtain, or may receive about the whereabouts of the people mentioned below should be passed to the officer named below.

NB: This form is designed to be completed electronically. The 'Tab' key will move the cursor. The 'Table', 'Insert', 'Rows' option from the menu bar will add in more rows as required. Boxes will expand to take us much text as the writer wishes to insert.

Agency originating Notice	
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Details of Officer originating Notice:			
Name		Location	
Tel		e-mail	

Missing Person(s)		
Name	DoB	Status in family e.g. father, mother, child

Last known home address:	
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Other information that may be relevant	
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Inter-agency Missing Child/Family Update to Initial Notice



Date of Initial Notice	
Date of this Update	

In accordance with the Dundee CYPPC Protocol on the Sharing of Information between agencies in Dundee about Children and Families who are Missing, the following updated information is provided as a result of:

(delete as appropriate)

1. the child/ young person's whereabouts becoming known (in which case you should remove the original missing notice alert from your information systems)
2. new information being obtained

Please update your records accordingly.

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Agency issuing this Notice	
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Details of Officer issuing Notice:			
Name		Location	
Tel		e-mail	

Missing Person(s)		
Name	DoB	Status in family <small>e.g. father, mother, child</small>

New/Updated information	
<i>(Insert free text here)</i>	
NB	<p><i>Those completing this section must consider whether it is appropriate to disclose any known new address or information, other than that the child or young person has been located. This should be done if the information would assist another agency fulfil its duty to protect a child or young person.</i></p> <p><i>Insofar as it is possible to do, those responsible for the care of the child or young person, as well as the young person themselves, should be asked to agree to any new address being shared with other relevant agencies.</i></p>

Inter-agency Missing Child/Family Response to Notice Received



This form should be used when an agency/department holds or has received information that could help in establishing the whereabouts of a missing child or young person.

Date of this Response	
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In accordance with the Dundee CYPPC Protocol on the Sharing of Information between agencies in Dundee about Children and Families who are Missing, the following response is provided to the notice received.

Please update your records accordingly.

NB: This form is designed to be completed electronically. The 'Tab' key will move the cursor. The 'Table', 'Insert', 'Rows' option from the menu bar will add in more rows as required. Boxes will expand to take us much text as the writer wishes to insert.

Agency issuing this Response	
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Details of Officer issuing Response:			
Name		Location	
Tel		e-mail	

Missing Child(ren)	
Name	DoB

Response information	
<i>(Insert free text here)</i>	
<p>NB <i>Those completing this section must consider whether it is appropriate to disclose any known new address or information, other than that the child or young person has been located. This should be done if the information would assist another agency fulfil its duty to protect a child or young person.</i></p> <p><i>Insofar as it is possible to do, those responsible for the care of the child or young person, as well as the young person themselves, should be asked to agree to any new address being shared with other relevant agencies.</i></p> <p><i>However, the duty to share information for the purposes of protecting children or young people overrides the responsibility to obtain consent to share information.</i></p>	

Protocol on the Sharing of Information between agencies in Dundee about Children and Families who are Missing

As of February 2009, the officers nominated by their department/agency as the point of contact for the transmission of information under the above Protocol are as noted below. Each person named below is responsible for notifying the others and the Lead Officer, CYPCC of any change in contact arrangements or details.

<p>DCC Social Work Department</p> <p>Heather Gunn Service Manager Social Work Department Jack Martin Way Claverhouse East Dundee DD4 9FF</p> <p>Tel: 436080 email: heather.gunn@dundeecity.gov.uk</p>	<p>DCC Housing Department</p> <p>Andy Whitelaw Advice & Development Officer Homeless Services Housing Department Lilywalker Centre 105 Ann Street Dundee DD3 7TG</p> <p>Tel: 432021 email: andy.whitelaw@dundeecity.gov.uk</p>
<p>DCC Education Department</p> <p>John Lannon School Community Support Service Education Department 6 Kirkton Road Dundee DD3 0BZ</p> <p>Tel: 307151 email: john.lannon@dundeecity.gov.uk</p>	<p>NHS Tayside</p> <p>Fiona Kerr PA to Nurse Consultant Child Protection Ashludie Hospital Monifieth Tel: 527841 email: fionakerr2@nhs.net</p>
<p>Tayside Police</p> <p>DS Jacquie Gall Family Protection Unit Seymour Lodge 259 Perth Road Dundee DD2 1JP</p> <p>Tel: 665117 e-mail: john.mcinally@tayside.pnn.police.uk</p>	<p>DCC Finance Department</p> <p>Ian Gillanders Head of Accounts and Benefits Revenues Division Floor 3, Tayside House Dundee</p> <p>Tel: 431300 e-mail: ian.gillanders@dundeecity.gov.uk</p>
<p>DCC Planning & Transportation Department</p> <p>Ron Tinley Support Services Manager Floor 15 Tayside House</p> <p>Tel: 433891 email: ron.tinley@dundeecity.gov.uk</p>	<p>DCC Personnel & Management Services</p> <p>Ian Martin Head of Personnel 8 City Square Dundee</p> <p>Tel: 434224 email: ian.martin@dundeecity.gov.uk</p>