| Police Scotland logo | Freedom of Information Response Our reference: FOI 23-0048  Responded to: 1st February 2023 |
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Your recent request for information is replicated below, together with our response.

**What approaches can be or has been applied to missing children investigations to improve the working practise between police and partner agencies to overall reduce harm, burden and/or demand?**

**I am attempting to answer this question.**

**As part of this evaluation, I am doing an ‘Assessment of Best Practise’ from other policing areas. They have requested a ‘what works’ evidence in relation to police response to missing person enquiries.**

**We want to get a clear picture of activity taking place in other Police Forces and the most up to date research on police response to missing persons investigations, with a particular focus on missing children/ missing children in care/ repeat missing children and partnership responses and improvements/ best practises/ lessons learnt. The findings will help to provide an evidence base that can be used to provide direction to further research/investigations as well as informing practice recommendations.**

**We write to request any information that police forces or researchers have on unpublished (grey) literature. This might include internal reports or evaluations of the following:**

**- Innovative practises for dealing with missing person enquiries – e.g. evaluating the impact of different operational models (e.g. Response teams, CID, Neighbourhood Policing teams, CSE teams, Dedicated Missing Person Teams) or police strategies used to locate missing persons safer and faster**

**- Strategies used by police forces and/or partner agencies to improve case management**

**- Strategies used by police forces and/or partner agencies to manage risk – e.g. strategies used to target resources to missing persons who pose the highest risk**

**- Police experiences and perceptions of partnership working and how that can be improved**

**- Multi-agency (local authority, social services, care homes, accommodation, charities) responses to missing children**

**- Facilitators and barriers to partnership working**

**- Cost effectiveness of police action in this area of missing people/missing children/ missing from care/ partnership working**

Whilst I note you have not provided a timescale in relation to your request, we have responded based on the current position.

At present Police Scotland has rolled out the LAC protocol which ensures that children are reported missing by the local authority to Police Scotland only when the risk to the child becomes intolerable.

This protocol means that the local authority makes attempts to trace the child which benefits both the child as there is less police engagement and also Police Scotland, as often a child is traced with no Police involvement.

In addition to the above, the return home discussion is done by the most suitable person, for example care home staff, instead of Police officers. Again this is more beneficial to both the child and Police Scotland.

The Philomena protocol is now in the process of being rolled out across Police Scotland. This Protocol involves a standard form being filled out by a local authority care home/ foster carer etc and being held by then in the event that a child in the care of that establishment/person has a missing episode. This then cuts down the time that Police spend obtaining background information on the child as the information is at hand.

The respect programme has recently been piloted by our G division (Greater Glasgow) and will shortly be subject to a review process prior to being implemented force wide.

Police Scotland’s National Missing Person unit exists to provide territorial Divisions with advice and Guidance pertaining to all aspects of Missing Persons.

The unit develops and evaluates protocols along with partnership agencies and strives to create and maintain a strong partnership working approach.

The protocols developed by the National Missing Persons Unit rely heavily on information sharing between partner agencies. Information sharing agreements by nature take time to be approved due to due process, which can be a barrier to expediting the implementation of new protocols.

All missing children are classed as high risk under the auspices of Police Scotland. This is the highest level of risk that can be applied to any missing person investigation.

In April 2019 Police Scotland launched the National Missing Persons Database. This Database fully records all information available for each Missing person investigation. This ensures clarity of information for operational officer/supervisors and the National unit.

If you require any further assistance please contact us quoting the reference above.

You can request a review of this response within the next 40 working days by [email](mailto:foi@scotland.police.uk) or by letter (Information Management - FOI, Police Scotland, Clyde Gateway, 2 French Street, Dalmarnock, G40 4EH). Requests must include the reason for your dissatisfaction.

If you remain dissatisfied following our review response, you can appeal to the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner (OSIC) within 6 months - [online](http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/Appeal), by [email](mailto:enquiries@itspublicknowledge.info) or by letter (OSIC, Kinburn Castle, Doubledykes Road, St Andrews, KY16 9DS).

Following an OSIC appeal, you can appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law only.

This response will be added to our [Disclosure Log](http://www.scotland.police.uk/access-to-information/freedom-of-information/disclosure-log) in seven days' time.

Every effort has been taken to ensure our response is as accessible as possible. If you require this response to be provided in an alternative format, please let us know.