



**VULNERABLE MISSING
CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE
ALERT PROTOCOL**

Updated March 2005

ALERT PROTOCOL FOR VULNERABLE MISSING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Partners to the Protocol

- **Glasgow City Council Social Work Services**
- **Strathclyde Police**
- **Barnardo's Street Team**

This protocol outlines the process for joint working to be followed in the sharing of information by Strathclyde Police, Glasgow City Council and Barnardo's Street Team in tackling the problem of vulnerable missing children and young people.

Name: _____
Glasgow City Council (Director)

Name: _____
Strathclyde Police (Chief Constable)

Name: _____
Barnardo's (Scotland) (Assistant Director)

Name: _____
Chair Glasgow Child Protection Committee



FOREWORD

In 1999, Glasgow Child Protection Committee set up an inter agency working group to take forward the issue of vulnerable children and young people within the City of Glasgow. The CPC Sub-group developed the Inter Agency Vulnerability Procedures which highlight 6 key areas of vulnerability.

Work has been ongoing to develop information and associated protocols around these 6 specific areas, and recently the CPC Sub-group focused on the issue of Missing Children and Young People. In addition, the Scottish Executive published national guidance relating to Missing Young People, with the expectation that each Local Authority will develop an inter agency protocol for missing children and young people.

This Alert Protocol brings together Social Work Services, Police and Barnardo's and outlines how information will be shared when a young person goes missing. The Protocol should be used when a young person who is missing is considered vulnerable as defined in Sect 4 of the Protocol. This Protocol should be read in conjunction with Glasgow Child Protection Inter Agency Vulnerability Procedures.

Joan Elliott
Depute Director Social Work Services
Chair of Glasgow Child Protection Committee

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 PRINCIPLES

Work with children and young people involved in high risk activity / behaviours needs to be co-ordinated as part of the multi disciplinary child protection system. Glasgow Child Protection Committee is therefore the appropriate body to take the lead role in the development and evaluation of this protocol. (Vulnerability Procedures Sect 4.1)

1.2 AIM OF PROTOCOL

The primary aim of this protocol is to establish a formal alert system between Glasgow City Council Social Work Services, Strathclyde Police and Barnardo's Street Team. Only those children and young people where there are significant concerns about their safety and who are known to be frequenting the City Centre should be alerted using this system.

Many of these children and young people will meet the criteria for Glasgow Child Protection Committee Vulnerability Procedures, and this alert protocol has been developed to minimise significant harm and risk to this very vulnerable group of children and young people.

1.3 CONFIDENTIALITY

A data sharing protocol has been agreed by Glasgow City Council, Strathclyde Police and Barnardo's Street Team.

Glasgow Child Protection Committee's Vulnerability Procedures clearly states that

“Confidentiality must not obstruct the exchange of information between agencies / organisations which may be essential to the protection of a young person from serious harm. The rights of the child should be considered at all times, and the sharing of information should be undertaken sensitively” (Vulnerability Procedures Sect 3.7)

The views and consent of children and young people should be ascertained and taken into account, however, these views should be balanced with the duty to take positive action to ensure the child / young persons safety.

2. TARGET GROUP

2.1 The target groups will include -

- **Young people under the age of 16 who are missing from the parental home**
- **Young people under the age of 18 who are missing and on a Statutory Order**
- **Young People aged 16-18 yrs who are living in unsettled accommodation**
- **Young people who are on the Child Protection Register**

AND WHO

- **Are thought to be frequenting Glasgow City Centre**

AND

- **Are at risk of being exposed to prostitution or child exploitation of any kind**

2.2 Where the child or young person does not fall into this target group the other reporting and recording systems that already exist should operate as normal and should not be superseded by this protocol.

3. REPORTING PROCESS

3.1 On the report of a missing vulnerable child or young person to the police, who is thought to be frequenting Glasgow City Centre, the information will be shared by Glasgow City Council Social Work, Strathclyde Police and Barnardo's Street Team in an effort to trace the child or young person and preserve his/her wellbeing.

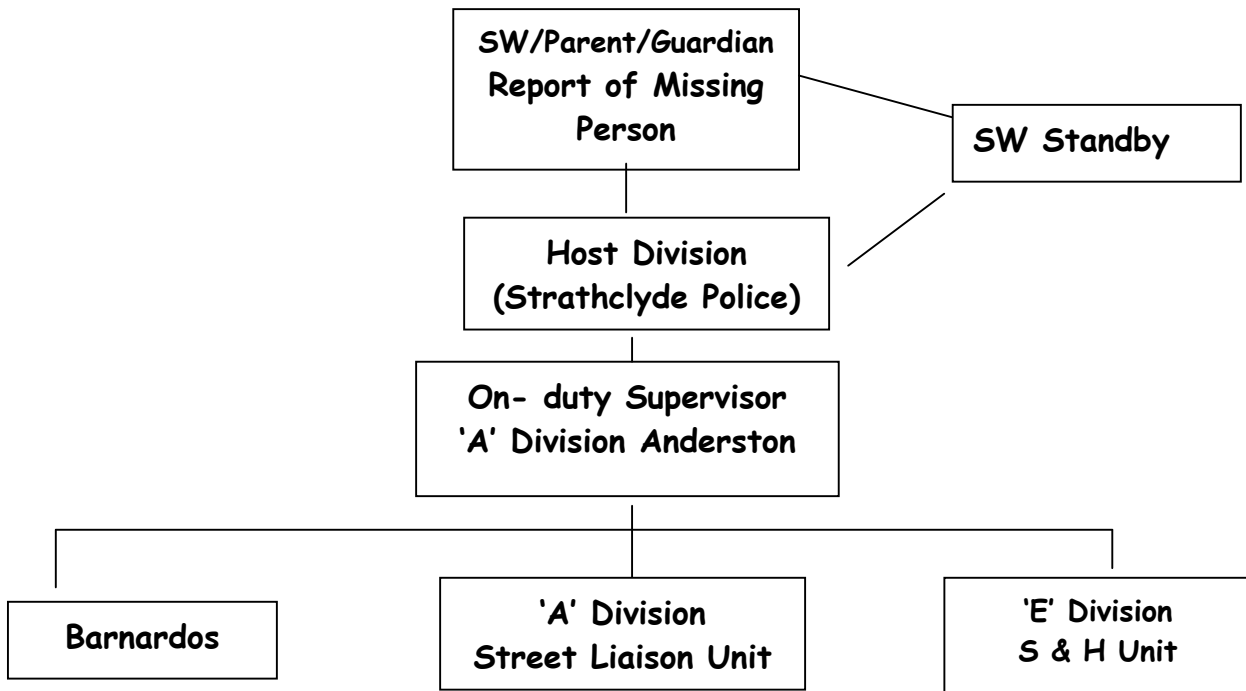
3.2 When a report of a missing child or young person, who meets one of the target groups is received by Strathclyde Police the descriptive information available on that child or young person will be passed to the on duty Supervisor 'A' Division Anderston Police Office.

3.3 The duty Supervisor will thereafter have the responsibility of passing the information to Barnardo's Street Team, Strathclyde Police 'A' Division Street Liaison Unit and 'E' Division Street and Hostel Unit. This information will be given at the commencement of the evenings outreach work (1800 – 1830 hrs)

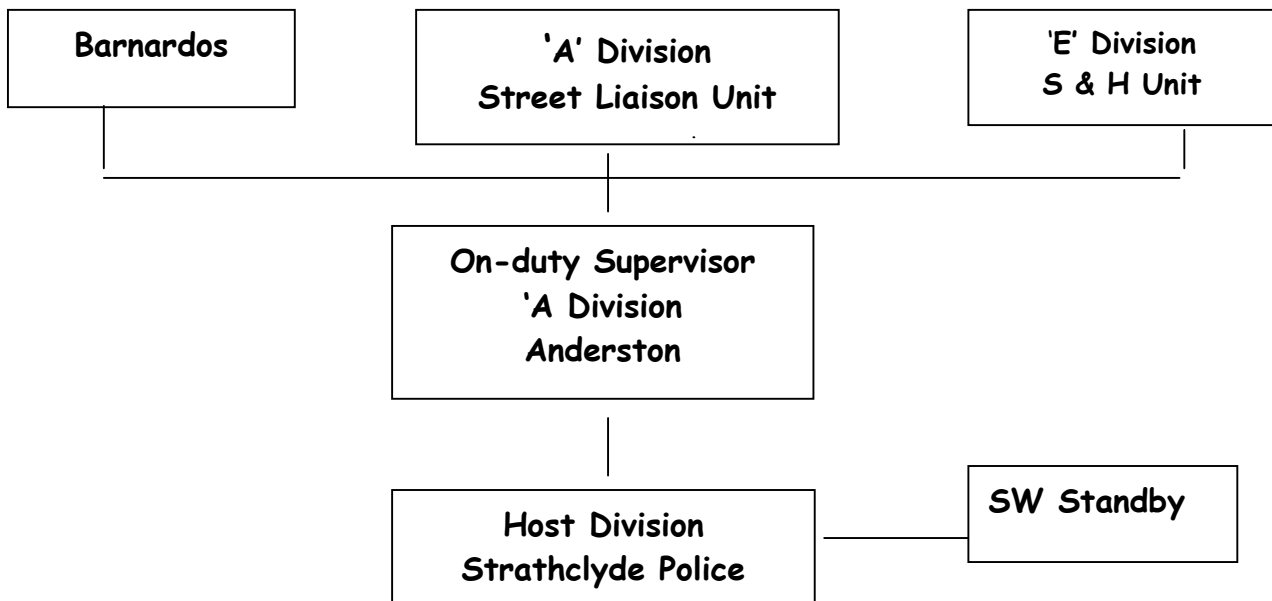
- 3.4 If a child has been reported missing by parents / carers in the Community, Strathclyde Police (host division) will notify Social Work Standby or relevant area team if the child / young person is considered to be at risk as defined by the protocol.
- 3.5 It will thereafter be the responsibility of Barnardo's Street Team and Strathclyde Police street teams to inform the on duty Supervisor, 'A' Division Anderston Police Office, of any contact made with the child or young person, or in any event, to make contact with a negative result at the conclusion of their shift.
- 3.6 Thereafter, the information would be passed to the Police Division where the missing report has been made.
- 3.7 This arrangement would be repeated on a daily basis until the child or missing person has been found and returned home.

4. FLOW CHART

INITIAL RESPONSE TO REPORT OF VULNERABLE MISSING CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON



AT CONCLUSION TOUR OF DUTY (2 am)



USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Police	Anderston	0141 532 3200
	London Road	0141 432 4600
Barnardo's	Street Team	0141 243 2393
	(Freephone)	0800 085 2704
Social Work	Standby	0800 811 505
	(Or Direct Police Line)	
ROC Project		0141 550 2398
	(Freephone)	0800 783 6686

PERSON: * MISSING - * ABSCONDED -
* FOUND - * WANTED



Division: _____ Station: _____ Date: _____

DETAILS

DIV. REF. NO.: _____ PNC WM NO.: _____

SURNAME: _____

MAIDEN NAME: _____

FORENAMES: _____

ALIAS: _____

AGE: _____

D.O.B.: _____

PLACE OF BIRTH: _____

GENDER * M / F

COLOUR: _____

NATIONALITY: _____

SCHOOL / PLACE OF WORK: _____

PHONE NO.: _____

OCCUPATION: _____

HOME ADDRESS: _____

PHONE NO.: _____

ADDRESS MISSING FROM: _____

PLACE LAST SEEN: _____

BY WHOM (RELATIVE): _____

DAY: _____

DATE: _____

TIME: _____

WARNING SIGNALS: _____

SCRO NO.: _____

CRO NO.: _____

DESCRIPTION:

HEIGHT: _____

BUILD: _____

HAIR: _____

EYES: _____

COMPLEXION: _____

MARKS / SCARS: _____

DRESS: _____

POSSESSIONS:

MONEY: _____

BANK / BUILDING SOC. BRANCH & ACC NO'S: _____

VALUABLES: _____

AGENCY RESPONSES

Social Work Services

Residential Child Care Services have existing procedures/protocols advising staff of the action that should be taken when a young person fails to return to the unit. These procedures sit alongside the Missing Persons Protocol for Vulnerable Children and Young People.

On a young persons return to the unit residential workers will undertake the following:

1. Notification of Young Persons Return

Residential staff will ensure that relevant workers/agencies are advised of the young persons return. This could include –

- Police (if police not involved in the return of the young person)
- Area Team (Social Work Standby Service)
- Young Person's Family
- Residential Child Care Services based at Social Work Services Headquarters.

2. Check Young Person is Alright

On the return of the young person residential workers will consider the immediate needs of the young person and ensure that consideration is given to –

- Medical needs
- Food
- Bath
- Sleep
- To talk to a member of staff

3. Residential Staff will speak with the Young Person

Depending on the time of day and emotional and physical condition of the young person, residential staff will speak with the young person. Normally the young person's key worker will spend time with the young person, but if they are not available or this is not appropriate, the unit manager will identify a colleague within the unit to talk to the young person. This discussion should take place within 24 hours of the young person's return.

Residential staff will –

- Express relief at the safe return of the young person
- Express concern regarding the safety and well being of the young person
- Gather information from the young person regarding where they have been and who they have been with
- Establish whether they are running away from something in the unit – this needs to be done by the unit manager and may not happen immediately, but as soon as possible
- Ascertain any risk factors
- Record all information

4. Log and Share Information with Relevant People

The young person's right to confidentiality will be upheld at all times, however, following the young person's return it may be necessary to inform –

- Area team social work
- Police
- Barnardo's Street Team
- Young Person's Family

Of any relevant information regarding the reasons why the young person did not return to the unit, to ensure a co-ordinated response to the needs of the young person.

5. Additional Support

Arrangements will be made for the young person to speak with a responsible adult they trust. Where appropriate Barnardo's Street Team or the ROC Project may provide additional support to the young person.

Barnardo's Street Team (BST)

When a young person that meets the criteria of this protocol goes missing and is reported as missing to the police, the police will fax Barnardo's Street team.

We will then write out to the young person to explain the service and we will arrange to meet the young person when they return.

When the young person returns, we will write separate letters to the parent/unit staff and the young person to arrange to visit them within a week.

Our focus is on helping young people to explore and develop strategies for keeping safe. The young person chooses the kind of involvement they have with the service.

Contact with young person:

In our contact with young people we will tell them that the service is confidential and that they are the focus of our work. We will explain the kinds of things we would need to talk to someone else about.

The contact with the young person will focus on risks, keeping young people safe, exploring the cause of going missing and what the worker and young person can do together to address the cause.

In particular the contact with the young person we will attempt to establish:

1. Why the young person ran away
2. Where they went
3. How they survived whilst they were away
4. What traumas were experienced by the young person whilst away and
5. What follow-up care/support the young person may need or want

The young person will be offered different resources dependent on their individual circumstances.

- Referral to or liaison with Strathclyde Police, Social Work, Education, Health and or specialist services.
- Use of the team's free phone service
- Work around keeping safe
- Opportunity to meet with staff from the Street Team when they are missing.

If we meet a young person who meets the criteria of the above protocol during streetwork:

What we do:

- Check if the young person is already known to us

- We will explain to the young person who we are, paying particular attention to Barnardo's Child Protection policy, how we can be contacted – information/card will be given out re how/where to contact and information will be given on the Inter-agency Guidance/Protocol regarding vulnerable children and young people. Information on what we will do with the information that they give us will be discussed in particular.
- We will attempt to ascertain why young person has run away/has no fixed abode. We will also discuss with them what interventions are required and what agency(s) we may need to contact.
- If young person has runaway, we will encourage them to either let us make contact or for them to make direct contact with someone from the resource that they have run away from. The purpose of this would be to let them know that they are safe and well and are either willing or not willing to come back. At no point is there an expectation to disclose where they are.
- If the young person is of no fixed abode and is unable or unwilling to return to their settled form of accommodation, with their permission we would negotiate via SW Standby, Hamish Allan Centre or their settled accommodation resources, a safe return to this accommodation or access to an alternative resource. This would also include assistance with transport.
- With the consent of the young person, the staff on duty the following day will make contact with the allocated social worker/duty worker and discuss any concerns that we may have, or action that we would like to progress.
- Finally, a file will be opened and details recorded on a database.

This process may take several contacts over the period of several shifts and staff will be required to use their discretion in how far to go with each contact. **The most important consideration is to maintain contact while actively working with the young person on options available to them.**

At all times the team will try to establish trust and work with the young person to resolve difficulties. However, there are circumstances beyond the normal limits of disclosure where statutory responsibilities, the public interest or personal health, may override an individual's right to have information kept confidential and may require it to be disclosed.

The following examples are provided for guidance: -

a. Young Person in Danger

- If BST assessment were that a young person is in danger to themselves or others then information would be passed on to the Street Liaison Team/Community Safety and/or appropriate agency.
- If a young person (**under 16**) is on the run from care, BST will advise SWD of contact. This will normally be the care placement. If on the run from parental home, BST will encourage contact with parents or guardians. In cases where this is not desirable or practical, Social Work standby will be contacted.

The above are most likely to occur during street contact.

b. Abuse Situations

If a **child under 16** tells BST that they are currently being abused. Information should be recorded and passed on to the Social Work Department.

If information from any young person suggests that **siblings or other children** are in abusive situations, then the information would be passed on to the Social Work Department.

The timescale for this information being passed on will reflect the young person's situation and the risk, which they or other children/young people may be considered to be at. Any information should be notified to the young person in order that they are fully informed of BST's actions and to reduce the risk of any later retraction.

c. Threat to Public Safety

Where a young person was deemed a threat to the safety of others, BST would notify the police (Street Liaison Team/Community Safety).

Information sharing

The Street Team will share information as appropriate with both Strathclyde Police and Glasgow City Council Social Work Services. The team will contact the Duty Officer at Anderston Police office with an update as agreed under the Inter-agency Protocol on vulnerable children and young people.

In order to make an accurate assessment of the situation, the team will contact SW Standby for further information on a young person as and when appropriate.

During the Street Team's contact with young people who meet the criteria of this protocol, we would pass on any information regarding criminal activity/sexual exploitation/grooming to the Child Protection Team

Contact Details

Barnardo's Street Team
91 Mitchell Street
3rd Floor Rear
Glasgow
G1 3LN

Tel No 0141 243 2393
Fax 0141 243 2696
Freephone No 0800 085 2704

ROC Project (Running- Other Choices)

The ROC Project is an Aberlour Child Care Trust Project that works with young people, under the age of 16, in Glasgow and East Renfrewshire who run away or are at risk of running away.

Aims

We aim to assist young people to find solutions to the circumstances which have caused them to run away from home and to minimise the risks of young people who are running away.

Activities

The **Outreach** Team provide support to young people who run away or are at risk of running away. This help includes individual support to resolve difficulties and/or build coping strategies, advocacy, mediation, support around school issues, help to access other services that could resolve difficulties or increase social support and the provision of information. This direct support is provided by two full-time staff, a Bi-Lingual Project Worker and a Mental Health Promotion Worker. Much of this work is carried out in co-ordination with other agencies including Social Work Services, Education Dept. Health Services and other voluntary agencies. It involves setting goals and reviewing these at regular intervals.

Work is usually carried out when a young person has returned home or to a care placement after running away and this support can continue from 3 months to, in some situations 18 months or longer. Young people's views as to the type, intensity and length of support required are central to what is offered.

We also deliver a PSE lesson in schools to help young people think about the issue of running away and help pupils access support before they run.

The **Refuge** provides time-limited accommodation and support to young people who run away and are at risk. Young people can be at risk because they are refusing to return home or to a care placement or because of the risks they would face if they did return. Admission assessments are carried out by Refuge staff but we also share this assessment with Stand-By Social Work Services and Barnardo's Street Team to prevent multiple assessments and to enable young people to access Refuge as quickly as is appropriate.

Once young people are in Refuge work begins to help them make and implement plans about their future. Crucial to this is also the involvement of parents/carers and other agencies, in particular Social Work Services. Initially, Refuge is granted for seven days and extensions for a further seven days are given in exceptional circumstances, so co-ordinated work needs to begin as soon as a young person accesses Refuge. Refuge staff contact and work with parents/carers emphasises that, excepting times when there are overriding child protection concerns, the purpose of Refuge should be to enable people to be brought together rather than driven further apart.

Refuge is provided under Section 38(1)(b) of The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and the accompanying regulations. It is a 3-bedded house in a confidential location registered as a residential children's unit and designated by the relevant local authorities as a Refuge.

Referrals

Anyone can refer a young person to ROC as long as the young person consents to this. Referrals come from young people, parents, education and social work staff and Strathclyde Police. We have a referral protocol with the four Glasgow Divisions of Strathclyde Police which will be live from January 2005 and facilitates the referral of young people who are reported as missing persons to be referred to ROC.

Contact Details

ROC Project (Running-Other Choices)
The School House, 1st Floor,
217-229 Orr Street,
Bridgeton,
Glasgow,
G40 2BN

Tel 0141-550 2398 Freephone 0800 783 6686
E-mail roc@aberlour.org.uk
Fax 0141-554 0455