

Initiative launched to prevent patients going missing from hospital



Police have teamed up with NHS Lothian to launch a first-of-its-kind initiative aimed at preventing vulnerable people going missing from hospitals.

Like most major cities, Scotland's capital often sees people leaving medical facilities without giving proper notification, resulting in a missing person investigation being launched by local officers.

To combat this occurrence, new specially-devised information leaflets have been prepared and are being issued to individuals attending at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh's A&E department, if medical staff believe they have a potential vulnerability.



The leaflet sets out the process for whenever a person leaves A&E without notifying staff, advising that they may be reported as a missing person, with police attending at their home address and speaking with family members friends and even employers to trace them.

Following discussion with other police forces and health

boards in England and Wales, this new process is being considered as best practice.

Inspector Neil Whiteside from Edinburgh Division said, "This is just one of a range of measures introduced in recent months to collaborate more closely and further professionalise the joint agency response to missing persons inquiries.

"Missing Persons investigations can absolutely save lives and the police and hospitals play a significant part in any enquiry where someone goes missing from these units.

"Preventing someone going missing in the first place however, is our respective organisations' joint priority.

"The benefit of this prevention approach, in addition to increased patient safety, is that it also frees up staff time from both organisations."

Dr Sara Robinson, Consultant in Emergency Medicine, NHS Lothian, said, "We're delighted to be able to work with Police Scotland on this initiative.

"Patient safety and wellbeing is our top priority and we welcome the opportunity to improve care for this vulnerable group of patients."