

Police and NHS partnership reduces number of people going missing from hospitals

A partnership between police and NHS Lothian has been hugely successful in reducing the number of people going missing from healthcare facilities in the Capital.

Between 2014 and 2015 analysis was undertaken by Police Scotland into the time and resource devoted to tracing those who left the grounds of the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, Royal Edinburgh Hospital and Western General Hospital.

The average amount of policing hours spent looking for an individual, who goes missing from an acute health unit, is over three hours. This figure rises to 15 and a half hours for those who absconded who go missing from mental health care units.



The analysis by Edinburgh Division officers alongside NHS Lothian staff NHS Lothian staff was used to formulate a strategy in order to address this issue.

As a result, an joint initiative was launched to help dissuade people who were attending hospital from leaving without first notifying staff. The campaign, which included posters for display in prominent locations, as well as leaflets, outlined what happens when someone goes missing, the associated costs involved and what people could do to ensure that they did not inadvertently become a missing person. and the associated

costs with , within hospitals and to help dissuade people from leaving hospital without first notifying staff. giving proper notification and authorisation. This included displaying posters in prominent locations and distributing leaflets.

Posters and leaflets were displayed and distributed within these facilities advising the public that if they go missing, then family members, friends and even work colleagues may be contacted to establish their whereabouts.

The literature also provided an overview as to the associated policing costs of a missing person inquiry.

In addition to raising public awareness, information sharing protocols were agreed with NHS Lothian, which enable enhanced risk assessment, allowing us to take a more informed approach when responding to a missing person case. to each case.

Since the launch of this campaign, the number of missing people from hospitals in Edinburgh has reduced by 26% in 2019.

Work continues to reduce these numbers further to relieve the burden on frontline policing and spare families from the distress of a loved one going missing.

Chief Inspector Neil Wilson from Edinburgh Division said: "The reasons why a person goes missing are often complex and varied and the purpose of this initiative was as much to understand these issues, as it was deterring people from becoming a missing person.

"We, along with our partners, felt it prudent to inform the public about what actually happens once they are reported missing and what that means for their family, friends and colleagues, as well as the staffing hours incurred by police and NHS staff.

"The support this project has received from NHS Lothian has been outstanding and demonstrates a real commitment to joint

working. and they have demonstrated a real commitment to mitigating against people going missing from their premises.

“It is great to see this initiative having such a positive impact, however neither agency will become complacent in our efforts, as we continue to work together to minimise the number of people who go missing from Edinburgh’s hospitals. “

Dr. Tracey Gillies, Medical Director, NHS Lothian said, “I would like to thank Chief Inspector Wilson and his team for their continued support, as together we respond to this important issue.”