



**Alzheimer
Scotland**
Action on Dementia



Return Discussions Edinburgh Pilot Final Report

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In partnership with



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Introduction

There are an estimated 90,000 people living with dementia in Scotland and 40% will be reported missing at some point, with 30% of these reported missing on more than one occasion. For some people living with dementia, going missing is a very real event and the upset and worry caused can be traumatic for those involved.

Alzheimer Scotland have been so concerned about the number of people with dementia going missing and the serious consequences of these missing incidences, that in response, they have developed a digital app, Purple Alert (www.alzscot.org/purplealert). The app is used by the families of those living with dementia to call for assistance in finding the person should that help be required. This process follows the Herbert Protocol – a national scheme introduced by Police in partnership with other agencies which encourages carers to gather useful information that could be used in the event of a vulnerable person going missing (Police Scotland, 2021). This paper-based approach is complementary to the Purple Alert app. When a Purple Alert is raised, it notifies users of the app nearby that a person living with dementia has gone missing. The notification informs users of the missing person's last known location and key information such as their name, photos, places of interest, clothes they were wearing, habits, routines, and relevant medical information. Purple Alert was launched in 2017 and it has been a successful service since, helping finding more than 45 missing people since launch.

Background to the Return Discussions pilot

Return Discussions (RD) have been routinely embedded into Police Scotland practice for some time. After a missing incident is closed and the missing person returns home, a 'safe and well check' is immediately performed by officers (usually within 24 hours). The safe and well check makes sure the missing person doesn't require immediate medical care or any immediate form of support. Within 72 hours from the missing person returning home, the Police will then carry out a RD, an open conversation discussing the circumstances of the missing incident, its potential causes and repercussions. The RD is recorded electronically in a form and uploaded in the Police Vulnerable Persons Database (VPD) for future reference.

In 2020, by comparing our statistics with the ones of Police Scotland E Division in Edinburgh, we realised that there was a large gap in Alzheimer Scotland's service provision. Between 01/01/2020 and 01/11/2020, there had been 113 reported missing people with a diagnosis of dementia in Edinburgh alone, but in the same period, we only had 3 Purple Alerts raised in the same area. Our Edinburgh Dementia Advisors also acknowledged that they didn't realise there were so many people with dementia missing in their area. It was clear that families affected by dementia didn't know about Purple Alert, but how much did they know about Alzheimer Scotland services?

In the same period, following some pioneering work by *Missing People* and *Barnardo's*, a referral system for Return Discussions was being implemented by Police Scotland for missing children. It was recognised that an external agency, with the right training and expertise in a specific field, would be better placed to carry out the RD and provide the right level of support almost immediately after the missing child returned home.

Alzheimer Scotland has been providing services for families affected by dementia for decades and has an holistic knowledge of the condition. Alzheimer Scotland has specific roles such as Dementia Advisors, Digital Dementia Advisors and Purple Alert Coordinators who can provide tailored support for people living with dementia and their families. Therefore we were identified as the most suitable agency for carrying out the RD.

"The Return Discussion was helpful. We now have a GPS, a voice activated door sensor and we get the Alzheimer Scotland Newsletter. Every Month we go to One Sixty cafe Over 65. All these measures made us feel safer. I think the changes made a difference and prevented her from going missing."

K.C. Carer

The Aims of Return Discussions

A Return Discussion is a 'free flowing' conversation aimed at understanding and gathering as many details as possible in relation to the missing occurrence. It's important that the RD is carried out as soon as possible, while all the details are still vivid in the family's memory. The RD aims are:

- Comfort and reassure the carer
- Debrief the missing occurrence
- Advise on how to mitigate other missing occurrences from happening
- Provide information and access to resources and supports

A Dementia Advisor can signpost each family to a range of activities and services, giving both physical and psychological support. A Digital Dementia Advisor can advise on a range of digital solutions which can have an immediate impact on the family's life, such as Purple Alert, Herbert Protocol, GPS devices and Internet of Things (IoT) consumer technology. Alzheimer Scotland inclusive range of services can provide the right support and access to therapeutic activities to each family.

"Police were wonderful, and very kind..."

After having the the Return Discussion with Caroline, we joined Alzheimer Scotland One Sixty cafe and as a result of one of the conversations there I was able to access some extra support, through Social Care Direct, Eric Liddell centre etc. I'm quite happy with the way things are going, things are falling into place. It's good to know that support is there when you need it."

F.M. Carer

"As a Dementia Advisor I am used to people contacting me in the first instance. However, the return discussion pilot has given me the opportunity to make contact with people living with dementia and their families who may not have otherwise known of or engaged with Alzheimer Scotland. My role is to provide support and reassurance to people living with dementia and their family. I advise of the supports available at Alzheimer Scotland; especially the role of the Digital Dementia Advisor who can provide more information on how technology such as GPS can aid people living with dementia's independence and keep them safe as well as providing reassurance to their families. I also signpost and make referrals onto external organisations who may be able to assist further. As well as ensuring that I provide my contact details for families to allow them to contact me in the future. I have one carer who has regularly kept in contact with me since a return discussion. We have noticed increases in people attending our monthly café and our Newsletter mailing list since the pilot began.

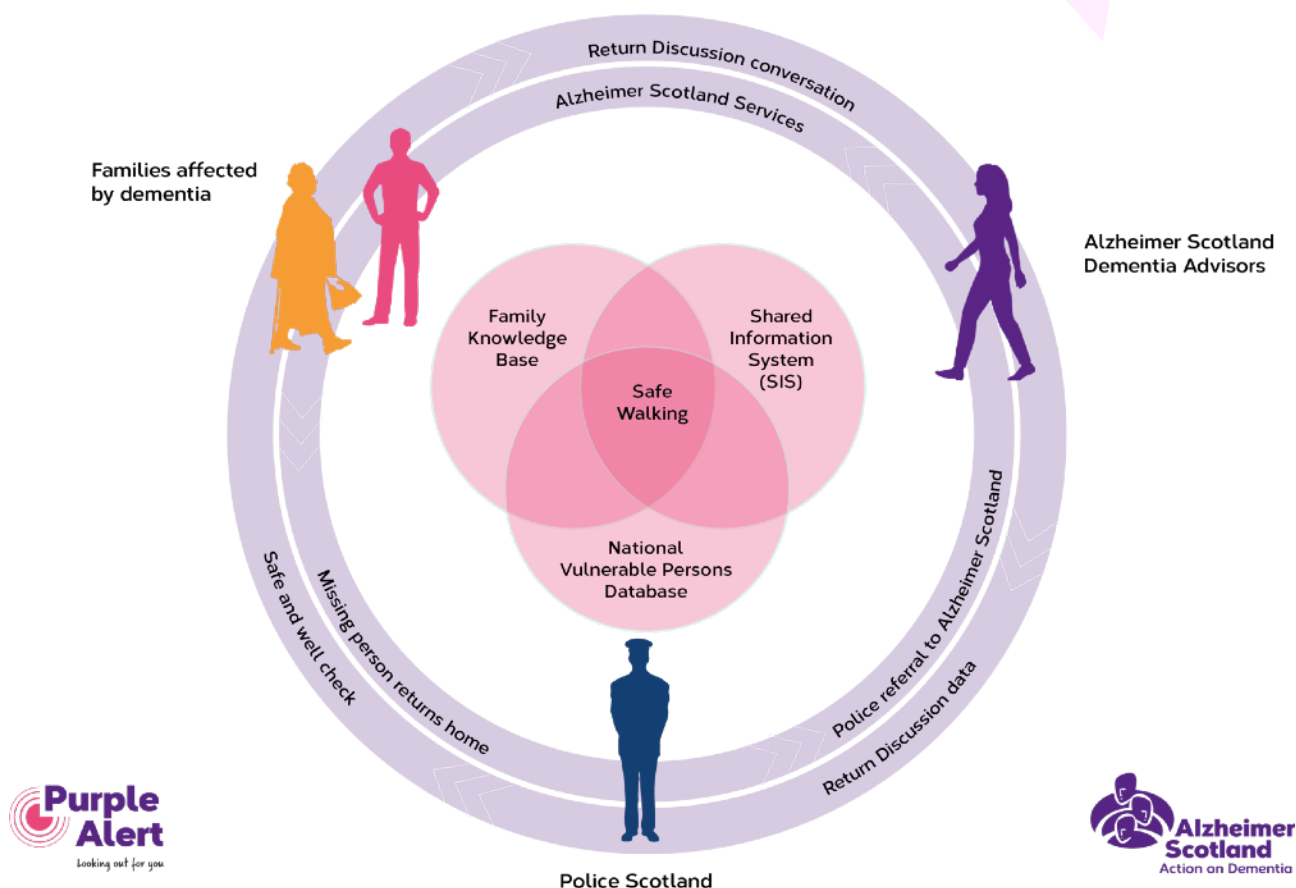
Caroline O'Hara Dementia Advisor - Alzheimer Scotland

How Return Discussions work

Before starting the Pilot in April 2022, Alzheimer Scotland and Police Scotland signed a Data Sharing Agreement in which they agreed the sharing of selected personal information via encrypted emails. When someone with a diagnosis of dementia is reported missing and returns home in the Edinburgh Area, Police Scotland will send the local Dementia Advisor Caroline O'Hara an encrypted email with the incident report. This 'concern report' contains all the known data relating to the missing occurrence, the family involved contact details and any other relevant information. Caroline would then arrange the RD over the phone or in person, to debrief the missing occurrence, provide comfort and inform the family about the most suitable services available. Purple Alert and the Herbert Protocol would be introduced and further referral to the Digital Dementia Advisor (DDA) may be put in place. The DDA can then advise on a range of digital solutions to prevent the missing occurrence from happening again. Caroline would then fill out a RD form with the updated details derived from the RD, and email it back to Police Scotland, who would store it for future reference in their VPD.

"The Return Discussion has a very distinct place within my role: normally I support families going through the process of deciding which technology they need now or perhaps in the future. Choice and decision-making is left in the hands of the family. With the RD, families have reached a crisis point, they feel under pressure and so need to be guided quickly to the correct solution for them, using all of my previous expertise to ensure a timely, affordable solution that works is put in place. It is a different approach to that than was envisioned for the role of the DDA- it would not be our usual practice but the RD shows that sometimes there is a need to be the provider of solutions and not merely the guide."

Kathy Wiles, Digital Dementia Advisor - Alzheimer Scotland



Pilot Evaluation – University of Edinburgh

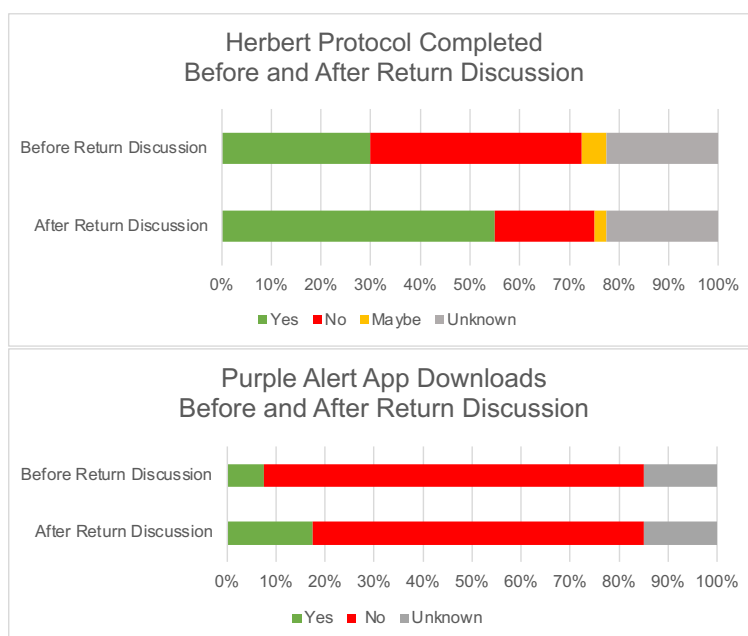
The University of Edinburgh gathered data across a 6-month period as part of the pilot evaluation. The reason for evaluating 6 months instead of 12 was purely logistical. We had to recruit a student, gather enough initial data to be analysed, and give enough time to the student to write the report. There was also a slight delay to ensure all the IT and data protection measures were adequately in place before being able to share sensitive data. Debbie Gray at the University of Edinburgh was selected amongst other candidates and delivered a very insightful report which can be viewed [here](#).

In the University of Edinburgh report there is a detailed analysis of quantitative and qualitative data related to the first 6 months of Return Discussions. The report gives a great outlook of the service and the excellent quality of data enables us to speculate on the benefits of continuing RD in Edinburgh.

Although some further data analysis will be included in this report, I will be focusing on the impact this pilot had on both the families affected by RD and the practice of the agencies involved in its delivery. One of the aims of this report is to build a case for the implementation of RD into Alzheimer Scotland everyday practice across Scotland. Furthermore, we hope that this report will be used as a case study by other agencies who want to improve their services in the realm of ‘missing’, both nationally and internationally.

“The main conclusion is that Return Discussions are an appropriate intervention, particularly with regards to gaining a better understanding of the missing incident and helping to identify people who could benefit from further support. Dementia Advisors are well informed on the range of support and services that are available to people, both within and outside of Alzheimer Scotland. The support provided during the Return Discussions could improve outcomes for people with dementia, reduce carer stress, and could help prevent future missing occurrences.”

Debbie Gray PhD Student and Tutor, University of Edinburgh



Excerpt from Debby Gray's report: the impact of RD on use of Herbert Protocol and Purple Alert.

Pilot Evaluation – Overall Statistics

Following project lead-in time required to set up necessary digital processes and test data protection protocols, we were able to collate data across a 10 month period between 25/04/2022 and 25/02/2023 to complement and add to the evaluation undertaken by Edinburgh University.

Police Scotland Edinburgh Division Missing Persons Incident Breakdown - Dementia	Outwith Pilot Period 25/04/2021 - 25/02/2022	Within Pilot Period 25/04/2022 - 25/02/2023
Demand:		
Missing with Dementia	104	92
Missing from:		
Home Address	71	64
Care Home	7	8
NHS	17	12
Other	9	8
Other details		
Average Time Missing	86 mins	62 mins
Gender Split	54male/50 female	50male/ 42 female
Average Age	80	80
Repeat Missing People (Number of people reported missing more than once)	12	16
Number of incidents for top 5 repeat missing people	24	15
Most prolific	Female - 9 incidents	Female - 3 incidents

The total number of missing incidents ‘with dementia’ from 25/04/2022 to 25/02/2023 was 92. However, only 71 of these had a formal diagnosis of dementia, therefore only 71 RD were carried out. Of these 71 incidents, 22 were missing twice. Of these 22, 6 were missing three times. The statistics demonstrate a decrease of 37.5% for the top 5 repeat missing people from the same time period last year.

The RD involved 49 families (PWLD/carers) and 26 of these involved our Digital Dementia Advisor Kathy Wiles. Kathy was able to provide an assessment and a tailored solution for each individual family. The majority of products introduced to these families by Kathy were ‘location devices’ such as GPS, Apple AirTags, and Otiom, but the recommendations included other consumer technology available on [ADAM](#).

The majority of families who took part in the RD joined at least one of Alzheimer Scotland services such as One Sixty Cafe Over 65, Younger Onset Support (Under 65), 1:1 support from Alzheimer Scotland staff. If they didn’t, it was because the family circumstances drastically changed after the missing occurrence, often resulting in the PLWD going into full time care, or passing away. Almost every family we contacted during the pilot decided to keep in touch with Alzheimer Scotland by subscribing to our newsletter.

As advised in the 6 months report, all 49 carers were contacted for an interview to share their experience of the RD and to measure their impact. Although only 22 of these were able to participate, they gave us a great insight of the impact RD had on their lives and their loved ones’.

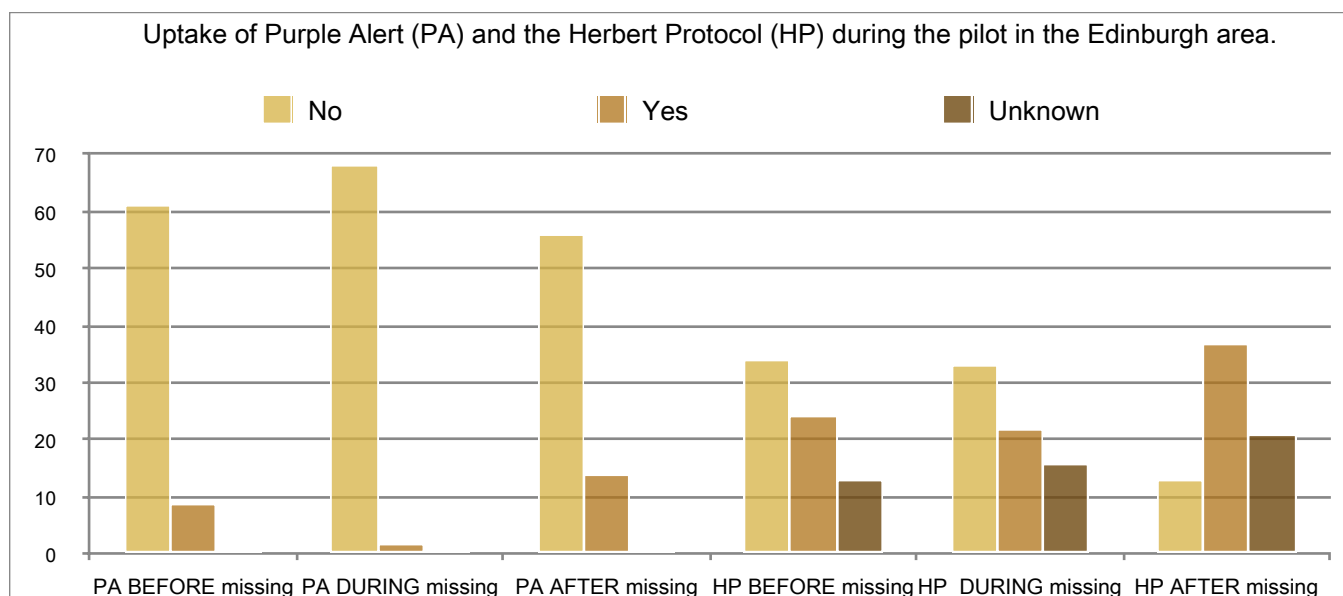
Return Discussions impact

The feedback we got for the RD pilot was overwhelmingly positive and the impact was significant. A large component of the families involved in the pilot weren't aware of the services Alzheimer Scotland provides, and they do now. The 'domino effect' that RD had on families is one of the most impactful parts of the pilot. There are a myriad of services delivered not only by Alzheimer Scotland, but Edinburgh HSCP and many local private or third sector organisations. By having a personal and empathetic conversation with the families, Caroline, who has a bird-eye view of the Edinburgh service offering landscape, was able to signpost each person to a specific service or activity. The carers mental health benefitted greatly by the initial conversation with Caroline, but by accessing one or more services as a result, families could implement meaningful change in their lives too. Often accessing these services led to access financial support, or involvement in further activities or a change of habits which improved the families wellbeing even more.

As predicted before starting the pilot, the RD allowed us to tie a relationship with families that we wouldn't otherwise have known about. This had an impact on Alzheimer Scotland's practice on several levels. Firstly, it substantially increased Caroline's workload and secondly it triggered a series of internal conversations around community reach, comms and service design.

It's hard to speculate what impact RD had in the number of missing incident (there are too many factors at play to make an informed assumption), but the statistics suggest an improved pattern, looking at fewer Missing incidents this year compared to previous years. (92 incidents in 2022/23 compared to 104 in 2021/22)

Furthermore, the data we have, suggests RD had an impact on reducing repeat missing (-37.5%). The anecdotal evidence collected during interviews strongly suggests that the implementation of technology after the RD prevented the missing person to go missing again, or enabled the carers to locate them much quicker. The uptake of the Herbert Protocol was significant throughout the pilot, as the majority of repeat missing had one in place, saving Police time and resulting in faster and more efficient investigations. The uptake of Purple Alert was less than hoped initially, but it resulted in 3 Purple Alert raised during the pilot period in the Edinburgh area.



Only in one occasion out of the 71 incidents (and in stark contrast with the other 70), the carer felt that the Police Officer responding to the incident didn't have the right training to understand her needs and her circumstances. This led to a review of the ongoing training offered by Alzheimer Scotland to Police Scotland via an initiative called Dementia Friends Scotland.

Some of the comments gathered during our interviews speak clearly of the impact RD had on the families who were surveyed.

"I was surprised as I didn't know the procedure but I was glad the Return Discussion happened, it was a very difficult and stressful time so any support was helpful and gladly received. Police were extremely helpful. I can't remember the actual Return Discussion as it was a while ago, but Alzheimer Scotland were brilliant giving me advice. If I had a tracker it would be brilliant, but we couldn't find any suitable option then."

J.F. Carer

"The Return Discussions were extremely helpful in my circumstances, very positive. The main positive aspect was that the DA was very understanding. Police on several occasions found my mum and had a chat but she didn't comprehend much of it. [...] Things moved up very quickly after the missing occurrence, so no change was implemented. Mum moving into care was best for everyone, she's doing well, she's settled."

P.T. Carer

"As a Care At Home Service Manager, I thought the Return Discussion was very good, very thorough, we talked about the client's needs, our processes as a care provider, and it was a good experience. [...] As long as the information gets processed in a meaningful way (by Police and Alzheimer Scotland e.n.) and it makes sure people with dementia are safeguarded. It's a benefit having a Dementia Advisor as they're trained and they're experts."

A.H. Care At Home services' manager

"The Dementia Advisor was very nice, understanding and very knowledgeable. [...] Caroline understands what the illness is all about. The Police is busy and might not have time to follow up as well as a Dementia Advisor."

L.D. Carer

"Caroline had very good suggestions and my sister have implemented some. The Apple Airtag worked well, we can keep an eye even from the comfort of our home, it's reassuring."

W.M. Carer

Merri's story

"It is 4pm on Wed 18th May. I am returning home from a very relaxing 5 days in Oxon with my sister/husband, breaking my journey with long standing friends in Morpeth. David, who has been diagnosed with 2 rare dementias, is in a reputable care home in Edinburgh. This is our first experience of respite. As no-one had visited him today, I am keen to know how he is, especially as I knew he had been deemed a flight risk some days earlier. Several calls and 30 mins later, after searching the home for David, the Manager phones to confirm what I had already deduced, that he is missing.



Multiple phone calls ensued with police, Care Home, friends in Edinburgh who rally round to help the police gain access to our flat. 6 hours later I get a phone call from Police to say David had been found, 11 miles away from the Home, in an area he doesn't know.

I return to Edinburgh the following morning and go straight to Home to take David home – 2 days prematurely. He looked dreadful which did nothing to lessen my anger.

When we get home there is a message from SW and, later on, a phone call from Caroline (O'Hara, Alzheimer Scotland Dementia Advisor e.n.) who explained her role - we met the following week.

Caroline showed genuine concern and understanding. We had both already spoken, separately, to the Manager of the Home and we discussed, in detail, the issues leading to David going missing. She talked through HP and PA. I had already completed both some months before but confess I had not remembered the PA in the chaos on the day – sorry, Tommy. Caroline offered to get Tommy to contact me, as I had some queries about the system – and he did!

We discussed tracker systems. We had had one unsatisfactory trial of a tracker which successfully tracked David out to a restaurant but left him there for 3 days despite retracing our steps! Caroline offered to get the Digital Dementia Advisor to contact me – which she did.

After the meeting, we had more contact – Caroline was able to provide me with the name and phone number of the lady who had called 999 having found David sitting on a bench in Howdenhall. I was able to thank her and find out more about how he was. As a Physio, she recognised that, although he did not present as having dementia, his illness was obvious after a few minutes chatting to him.

David is now in full-time care, in a different care home – so life has changed dramatically for both of us.

However, I know Caroline is someone who I could contact if I had any queries about resources and support – if she doesn't know the answer, she will probably know someone who does!

Finally, there was one very pleasant and unexpected outcome from the meeting with Caroline – she persuaded me to apply for a 'time for you' grant available to carers. I was successful and, on 3rd September, had a very indulgent 7 course tasting menu with matching wines at my favourite restaurant in Edinburgh!"

Police Scotland – Delivery Partner

PC Yocksan Bell, who was the instigator of the RD pilot and the formal partnership with Alzheimer Scotland to deliver it, was pivotal in the success of the project. Yocksan had the onerous task of creating a Data Sharing Agreement to allow all the partners to work on sensitive data. He facilitated the communication between teams and made sure E Division Officers were aware of the new protocols. In our fortnightly ‘check in’ meetings Yocksan and Caroline had the opportunity to discuss and review logistics, workload and individual cases.

“As the Missing Persons Operational Coordinator for Edinburgh I am delighted with the partnership we have formed with Alzheimer Scotland to improve how we support people living with dementia affected by going missing. This is a high risk area of business for us and the responsibility of delivering good quality return discussions is vital. Alzheimer Scotland are able to deliver on this and have demonstrated that they are the best placed agency to speak to families and carers after an incident. Their skill and expertise in this area allow them to offer help and advice to all involved to help prevent further incidents and to improve public safety.”

PC Yocksan Bell - Missing Persons Operational Coordinator - E Division

The entire project wouldn’t have been possible without the support and the long term vision of the Chief Inspector in charge of Partnerships, Neill Whiteside:

“This is a tremendous step forward and offers a significant improvement on what the police alone were able to provide in terms of return discussions. People living with dementia have a series of specific needs and challenges and the police are not best placed to address these needs on their own. Alzheimer Scotland, having the skills, expertise, experience, training and access to a much wider network of specialist support, are able to visit those persons who have gone missing with dementia and deliver a much better return and follow up service. They are able to give families support and advice and offer bespoke suggestions and coping strategies which ultimately serve to keep people safe.”

Neill Whiteside - Chief Inspector Partnerships Police Scotland Edinburgh Division

Every family involved in the pilot highly praised the Police Officers who responded to the missing incidents and the way they had conducted the investigation, how they dealt with the person living with dementia in such an upsetting circumstance and how they helped reuniting the missing person with the family.

Key Performance Indicators

When we launched the RD pilot last year, we couldn't have predicted how immediate the impact of RD would be in the lives of the families involved in the pilot. At the same time, we were perhaps too ambitious in thinking that families would make significant decisions and implement changes in a short period of time, especially after a traumatic experience such as a missing occurrence. For example, of all the families we were referred to as part of the pilot, the majority signed up to our newsletter since it required minimal effort, but in comparison only 14 signed up to Purple Alert.

We appreciate that the timing of RD is very sensitive, following a traumatic event. Furthermore, the circumstances of some families dramatically changed as a result of the missing occurrence, in some cases with people going into full time care, or being admitted to hospital. We quickly realised that each family needs to process the event, adjust to changes and introduce new solutions at their own pace.

Below a comparison of the KPI's we anticipated before the pilot and the actual achievements at the time of writing this report.

KPI's set out at the beginning of the pilot	Actual results as of 25/02/2023
125 return discussions	71 return discussions
100 families using Purple Alert	14 out of 49 families now using Purple Alert
75 family's access on-going support	Estimated 50% family's access on-going support*
50 families (40%) up-taking digital/tele health solutions	26 families (53%) up-taking digital/tele health solutions
80% fewer repeated missing occurrences	Estimated reduction in repeated missing occurrences **
A full evaluation of pilot completed for RS McDonald Trust	Completed
Complement the National Missing Persons Strategy	RD now being considered during the revision of the National Missing Person Framework for Scotland.
Have kept people safe	Considerable reduction of repeat missing incidents compared to the same period last year.

"The third time he went missing, I didn't even have to call the Police, as I had sewn an Apple Airtag in his jacket, so I looked on the iPad, worked out where he was and picked him up right away."

P.W. Carer

* Ongoing support is difficult to quantify as many families circumstances changed drastically in the days/weeks following the missing occurrence resulting in people going into long term care or passing away. We however estimated that 1 in 2 families wanted to keep in touch with Alzheimer Scotland via email/ phone/ support groups.

* * The circumstances and variables which have an influence on 'repeat missing' are too many to accurately measure. However, the anecdotal evidence of the pilot suggests that the RD have indeed curbed the repeat missing trend. The statistics demonstrate a decrease of 37.5% for the top 5 repeat missing people from the same time period last year.

Conclusion

The Return Discussions pilot made an impact on both the families involved and our practice, well beyond our expectations. The referral from Police Scotland made it possible for us to make contact with families which we wouldn't necessarily have connected with. Caroline was primarily a listening ear in a traumatic moment for each of these families, and was able to comfort them at the moment of need. In addition to this, Caroline had the skills to debrief and summarise each missing occurrence in order to relay all the essential information to the Police for future reference and the feedback we received from Police was that this was more than adequate. The feedback we received from our colleagues in Edinburgh HSCP suggests that the RD work has had an impact on their work too and we're now seeking ways to measure it. Kathy Wiles interventions were tailored, person centred solutions which resulted in preventing people going missing or shortening further missing incident's duration, hence reducing anxiety, stress and ambiguous loss. More than half of the families involved in RD are now using some type of consumer technology or digital/tele health solution, and we can now follow them up and advise on the suite of resources our Innovations and Development Team at Alzheimer Scotland developed.

"I think it's positive that we had a conversation with a specialist in dementia. We also spoke to a technology expert, [Kathy e.n.] and the changes made us feel better, reassured us."

F.M. Carer

The increased uptake of the Herbert Protocol as a direct result of RD, demonstrates how a simple tool can make a huge difference in both the logistics of a Police investigation and the emotional strain experienced by the family. There was general interest towards Purple Alert, but we found that for the majority of the families, there were more pressing priorities to tackle. At the beginning of the project, we underestimated the emotional weight and the personal disruption a missing occurrence has in the family life. The impact of this, is so significant that it often results in family routines being completely disrupted, new care plans being introduced, and sometimes people being sectioned under the Mental Health Act or going in long term care. Putting all this into perspective, we were perhaps overambitious expecting people to download the Purple Alert app at a time of such crisis and trauma. Having said that, our ongoing comms strategy, boosted by the awareness campaign for the RD pilot, is having a positive impact on the use of Purple Alert. Since March 2022, we had 1082 new users, a 23.5% increase of our community of users.

"The Herbert Protocol was the best thing ever, the second time my dad went missing it saved so much time. Police were able to go out and search my dad right away, instead of coming to my house, ask all the details and get a photograph etc. I reckon it saved us about an hour. Anything can happen in that hour, my dad could have got onto a bus and have been miles away."

O.H Carer

Arguably the most encouraging data is the feedback we got throughout the pilot in our emails, phone calls, one to one meetings and support groups, which had one common denominator: "It's good to know that support is there when you need it." The warmth in which this feedback is delivered is not easy to convey in a written report, but we know that we are making a difference and the families we are supporting are grateful to all the people involved in the project, the funders and the delivery partners.

Return Discussions have been part of the international discourse in the Missing Persons field for some years and this project corroborates the notion that if they're carried out by an expert in the field, they can have a significant impact, especially on repeat missing occurrences. The multi agency approach has positive repercussions on a variety of factors which ultimately impact the missing person well-being.

In Scotland, the RD work and its outcomes are underpinned by the principles contained within the National Missing Persons Framework for Scotland; Prevent, Respond, Support and Protect and it's likely to be mentioned in the next National Dementia Strategy.

This pilot brings together rich learning in a city context, demonstrating clear added benefit for both families and Police Scotland in providing a high quality and responsive professional service where sensitive, crucial conversations can occur with families to help reduce missing occurrences of people living with dementia.

On the back of this project, Alzheimer Scotland and Police Scotland are in the process of formalising a partnership agreement to validate the endorsement of each other's services and to pave the way for other impactful project such as the Return Discussions.

"For me as a son, to get the call in the middle of the night "dad is missing", it was a scary experience, it wasn't nice at all. So getting things off my chest, talking it through with Caroline it was a really good thing for my mental health.
It's better if Alzheimer Scotland carry out the Return Discussions, it frees up Police time. Unfortunately dad is in a nursing home now. He's totally safe now thou."

O.H. Carer

Going forward

This pilot really pinpoints the powerful impact and added value a Return Discussion brings for a family when they need it most. Additionally the data demonstrates how this approach helps reduce repeat missing incidents, with a decrease of 37.5% for the top 5 repeat missing people from the same time period last year.

The report also brings together perspectives from all stakeholders involved and most importantly, the voice of the families affected. A clear unanimous view from all involved is that there is an unmet demand for Return Discussions and we are the best placed agency to deliver that service.

The evaluation has also helped inform us on the level of resource required to deliver a reliable and high quality RD service. We have trialled this as a part of our existing Dementia Advisor role, enabling us to accurately quantify the added caseload this requires in an urbanised city setting.

The pilot also highlights current gaps in understanding, such as the low uptake of Purple Alert app among affected families. As part of our wider aspiration to roll out the RD service to families elsewhere in Scotland, we feel it's important to understand how the level of demand and style of approach for a Return Discussion may vary depending on the geographical, social and cultural setting of a diverse Scotland e.g. Edinburgh City vs the more rural and remote Highlands and Isles. Being able to compare data and statistics in such diverse settings, would give us a much better understanding of RD, its feasibility and the required resources for sustainability.

Such an opportunity exists, resulting from our existing close partnership with Police Scotland in L division (West Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute) to recently launch the Dementia Safeguarding Tag which has significantly raised local profile of missing people, Herbert Protocol and Purple Alert.

Going forward, our next challenge will be to identify ways we are able to build on the valuable skillsets, knowledge and experience within our local Edinburgh team to sustain the service in Edinburgh and expand this into a rural setting such as Argyll & Bute, building on the strong partnership foundation we share with Police Scotland.

The upset experienced by a family when their loved one goes missing can be truly devastating. We wish to use the rich learnings from this pilot to expand the successful Return Discussions approach into other communities. Coupled with a promotional drive of Purple Alert, we believe this can reduce the number of vulnerable people with dementia going missing and the trauma experienced by families across Scotland's communities.

Tommy Petillo
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March 2023



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