



TAYSIDE POLICE
'Here for you'

keeping children **safe**

Information disclosure about
child sexual offenders

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES



**safer
scotland**
SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

Introduction

Community disclosure is now running in the Tayside Police Force area. This will provide a formal route for the public to directly raise child protection concerns and be confident that action will follow.

This enables parents, carers or guardians of children under 18 years old to make a formal request for the disclosure of information about a named person who may have contact with their child if they are concerned that he or she might be a registered child sexual offender – for example, if a single mother wants to find out more about her new boyfriend.

It does not replace checks completed by Disclosure Scotland or employment checks provided by the Vetting and Barring Scheme (the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007).

How does community disclosure help?

The aim of community disclosure is to test the effectiveness of giving parents, carers or guardians a more formal mechanism for requesting information about someone involved in their family life, specifically if they are concerned that the person might be a child sexual offender.

There's a common myth that most sex offences are carried out by strangers.

The reality is very different.

The vast majority of sex offenders are known to the victim and often they are an acquaintance or family member. In 86% of child protection referrals, where action was required, the primary known or suspected abuser was the child's natural parent. In only 1% of cases was the abuser unknown to the child or their family.

Tayside Police Force will discuss your concerns with you and decide whether it is appropriate for you to be given more information, and whether this will help protect the child involved.

Can I participate in this community disclosure?

You can participate if:

- > **both you and the person you are asking about live in the community disclosure area; and**
- > **you are the parent, carer or guardian of the child involved in the enquiry.**

Regardless of where you live, should you have any concerns about a child's wellbeing, even if you are not a parent, carer, or guardian – you should contact your local social work services or police force as soon as possible.

How can I apply to participate in the community disclosure?

STEP 1

Anyone can register an interest about an individual and/or child with the police.

STEP 2

There are many different ways to contact the police.

You can:

- > **visit a police station;**
- > **phone the police; or**
- > **speak to a police officer on the street.**

STEP 3

To be given any information about a person you must be a parent, carer, or guardian.

You will then be asked to fill in a form with a police officer. This will happen when you first contact the police if you go to the police station, or at a later time if you contact the police in another way.

You will need to provide proof of your identity, an address, including a photo ID and some proof of your relationship to the child in question.

Ideally, you will need to show two forms of identification (one of which must be a photo ID). These can be:

- > **your passport;**
- > **your driving licence;**
- > **a household utility bill;**
- > **your bank statement;**
- > **your benefit award notice; or**
- > **your birth certificate.**

To establish your relationship with the child you will need to show one of the following:

- > **the child's birth certificate;**
- > **the child's passport; or**
- > **the child benefit award notice letter.**

However, if photo ID is not available, the police will consider other forms of ID.

STEP 4

The police will act immediately if, at any point during the investigation, a child is considered to be at risk and in need of protection.

The police will run two types of checks on the individual that you have concerns about:

a) Priority checks

The purpose of these checks is to establish if there are any immediate issues of concern about the safety of a child and to take appropriate action. **If the police believe children need protecting, they will take immediate action.** No disclosure of information will take place at this stage.

b) A full risk assessment

The police will run more detailed checks and work with other agencies including Social Work Services and those agencies involved in local Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA). The full risk assessment should be completed within 10 working days of contacting the police. They will work as quickly as possible to complete the checks but, in rare circumstances, some checks may take longer for the results to be received.

The maximum target time it should take to complete the enquiries, including possible disclosure to the applicant, is six weeks but even then there may be some delays due to factors beyond the control of the police.

The police will act immediately if at any point during the investigation a child is considered to be at risk and in need of protection.

STEP 5

The police will contact you once the priority checks and a full risk assessment have been completed. Careful consideration will be given as to what further action should be taken.

They will either:

- a) contact you in person (the police will visit you, or invite you to the station); or
- b) contact you by letter (this will only happen if there is no information to be provided and you have previously agreed to be contacted by letter).

STEP 6

What kind of information might be given?

If the checks show that the person you are asking about has a record for sexual offences against children, you may be given relevant information about that person which is necessary and proportionate to protect your child.

If there is no previous record of sexual offences against children, in respect of the individual concerned, then it may be that no information will be provided.

The police will give you advice on keeping your children safe and will make sure you are aware of what support is available.

It may be that although an individual is not known to the police for sexual offences against children, he or she may be showing worrying behaviour, or may be known for other offences that might put your children's safety at risk – such as serious domestic violence. In this case the police will work with you to protect your children and provide further advice and support.

STEP 7

After you are given information.

*“Can I tell my family and friends about this?
I really need to talk to someone.”*

If you do receive information from the police it must be treated as confidential. It is only being given to you so that you can take steps to protect your children. You must not share this information with anyone else unless you have spoken to the police, or person who gave you the information, and they have agreed with you how it will be shared.

Subject to the condition that the information is kept confidential, you can:

- > use the information to keep yourself and others safe;
- > use the information to keep your children safe;
- > ask what support is available;
- > ask who you should contact if you think you or others are at risk; and
- > ask for advice on how to keep yourself and others safe.

The police may decide not to give you information if they think that you will discuss it with others.

The police may take action against you if the information is disclosed without their consent, which could include civil or criminal proceedings.

STEP 8

The end of enquiries.

“Nothing was found on the searches, but this has really made me think about protecting my child. Is there anything else I can do?”

If you think a child is in immediate danger, call the police on 999.

A number of organisations provide information about child sexual abuse, how to spot it and how to work with the authorities to intervene.

Part of the process of the community disclosure is to make sure that you have information about services.

You can also keep in regular contact with the police.

Even if a person doesn't have a record for sexual offences against children it doesn't mean that he or she is not potentially a risk.

Support helplines

If you are concerned that a child is in immediate danger: Call 999

If you are concerned about the welfare of a child:
Call the **National Child Protection Helpline** on **0800 022 3222** or visit **www.infoscotland.com/childprotection**

Stop it Now! is a confidential freephone helpline for people who might be worried about their own thoughts and feelings towards children or the behaviour of others; parents and carers of young people with sexually worrying behaviour; and professionals needing help with difficult cases. This confidential helpline operates from 9am – 9pm Monday to Thursday and from 9am – 7pm on Friday. The number to call is: **0808 1000 900** or visit the website: **www.stopitnow.org.uk**

For general information about keeping children safe:
CHILDREN 1ST, 83 Whitehouse Loan, Edinburgh EH9 1AT
Tel: **0131 446 2300** / Fax: **0131 446 2339**
Helpline **0808 800 2222** / Email: **info@children1st.org.uk**

Parents and carers can call the national, free and confidential helpline: ParentLine Scotland on 0808800 2222. ParentLine opening hours are: Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9am - 5pm; Tuesday and Thursday 9am - 9pm.

For advice on online and internet safety:
The Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre at **www.ceop.police.uk** provides a range of very useful advice for young people, parents, teachers and other professionals. The information to help parents can be found at **www.thinkuknow.co.uk**

CEOP also runs the 'most wanted' service for local police forces where members of the public can work with the police to locate some of the UK's most wanted child sex offenders.

You can register to receive updates about these offenders by visiting www.ceop.police.uk/wanted

How are registered child sexual offenders usually managed?

By law, Local Authorities, Police, Scottish Prison Service and NHS have to work together, sharing information to manage known offenders. This process is known as MAPPAs (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements). You will have local MAPPAs in your area. The agencies involved in MAPPAs use a range of methods to manage offenders and reduce the risk of them committing further offences. The management arrangements include:

- > police visits and interviews;
- > regular multi-agency meetings to share information, take action and reduce the risk of harm;
- > ongoing reviews of the level of risk each offender poses;
- > surveillance of high-risk offenders;
- > treatment to reduce re-offending;
- > recalling offenders to prison for any serious breach of the conditions of their release;
- > providing supervised accommodation where offenders can be closely watched, tagged or put under an appropriate curfew; and
- > controlling how information about specific offenders is shared with the public or key community representatives.

Examples of disclosure requests

Scenario 1

“My daughter’s new boyfriend wants to look after her child all the time – so much so that I never see my grandson any more. I’m worried. It doesn’t feel normal. Is there anything I can do?”

Concerns raised by grandparents, friends and those associated with the family as well as concerns from family members will be checked. This is part of the normal child protection procedures in place and happens in all areas across the country.

Scenario 2

“I don’t like the look of my neighbour and she is rude to me. Can I check her out?”

Not unless you are concerned about your neighbour’s relationship with certain children. The purpose of community disclosure is to protect children. The police will want to know on what grounds you want to check out your neighbour and which children he or she has access to. The police also have a duty to explore why this is being requested to ensure that it is not malicious.

Scenario 3

“I’m a single mum and I’ve got a new partner. I don’t know very much about his past and I want to make sure my children are safe with him. What can I do?”

If both you and your partner live in the community disclosure area, you can ask the police to check whether your partner has a record for sexual offences against children.

If it turns out that your partner has such a record, and is thought to be a serious risk to your children, the police will take appropriate action to protect you and your children. This may include disclosure of information to you.

If the investigation does not reveal any record of sexual offences against children, but there are other reasons which mean the police might be worried about the safety of your children – for example, if the person has a record of domestic violence – the police will take steps to protect your family which may include considering disclosing to you the previous offences of domestic violence.

If at any time the police are concerned about the safety of your children, or you, they will act very quickly to protect you.

However, you should be aware that police checks are not a guarantee of safety because not all child sexual offenders have been detected.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1

You mention child protection procedures. Does this mean my child can be taken away from me?

A1) Children are only ever removed from their families in rare circumstances where they face a risk of serious harm if they remain in that environment.

Community disclosure is a process to help parents, carers or guardians better protect their children. Children may not be taken away from the family home if the parent, carer or guardian works with the police, social work services and other involved agencies to make sure their child is safe from harm.

Q2

Will the person I am asking about know they are being investigated?

A2) No, unless they are found to have a record for sexual offences against children or offences relevant to the protection of children. In such cases the police, along with other agencies, will decide the best way to proceed to protect you and your children. This may involve the police working with the person to encourage disclosure.

Q3

Will the person I am asking about know I started the investigation?

A3) No, your confidentiality will be maintained unless there is a good reason to decide otherwise. In this case, the offender may be informed that you are to receive information about them but this will depend on the circumstances.

Q4

Will the person investigated have any sort of record just because I've asked about them?

A4) The police will keep a record of the enquiry in order to help with the evaluation of how successful the community disclosure has been and also for policing purposes. This is NOT a criminal record of any kind but it will allow police to keep a record of any concerns in case a pattern develops in relation to a particular person.

My friend lives in the community disclosure area and she can check out her new boyfriend to see if he has a record of sexual offences against children. I can't because I don't live in the community disclosure area – that doesn't seem fair. Why should one area have this privilege?

Q5

A5) This is a trial to see how effective community disclosure is, and we need to carry it out in a limited area in order to be able to understand and measure what works and what doesn't.

The results of the community disclosure will be reviewed and then a decision will be taken as to whether community disclosure should be adopted nationally.

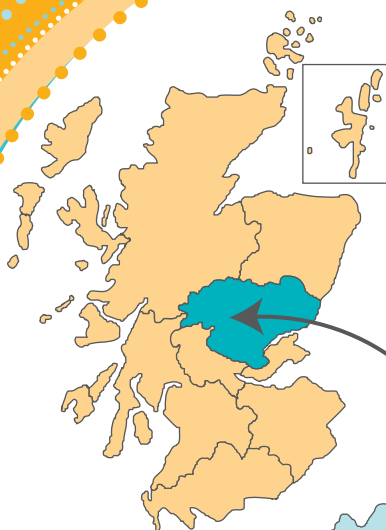
If you have a concern about an individual who has contact with your child, even if you are not living in the community disclosure area, you should still discuss these concerns either with the police, local social work services or by contacting one of the helpline numbers given above.

Where you contact the police or social work services it will be decided if further enquiries are needed and, in appropriate circumstances, they may give you information regarding a person's convictions.

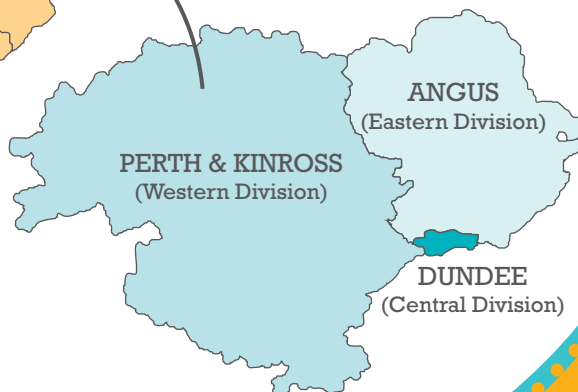
Contacting Tayside Police about community disclosure

You can contact Tayside Police
by telephone: **0300 111 2222**

Or visit their website:
www.tayside.police.uk/



Where is the community
disclosure area?



If you think a child is in immediate danger, call the police on 999.

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