

# News Release

May 27, 2009

## **SEX OFFENDER DISCLOSURE PILOT TO LAUNCH IN TAYSIDE**

A pilot project to provide parents with improved access to information about known sex offenders who may be in contact with their children will be trialled in Tayside from later this year, Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill said today.

Criminal justice agencies across Tayside are now working to prepare for the implementation of the scheme from September 2009 - running until the end of May 2010, with a final evaluation report due to next summer.

Under the scheme, members of the public within the pilot area to register a child-protection interest in a named individual who has unsupervised access to their child(ren).

Police will be more readily alerted to concerns, with a presumption that they will inform the parent, carer or guardian if the named person has convictions for sex offences. If the child is found to be at serious risk of harm then child protection measures will be instigated.

Mr MacAskill said: "Devolution has enabled the Scottish Parliament and our criminal justice agencies to make significant changes to the management of sex offenders – building on three expert reviews and a cross-party committee inquiry.

"With this pilot the Scottish Government is going further still as we make good our commitment – shared right across Parliament – to continuously review how best to further safeguard our communities.

"Our statutory agencies have considerably strengthened how they work together to protect communities from the potential risks posed by offenders but the public too has a role in assisting the authorities.

"I'm pleased to confirm that Tayside will be the area for the sex offender disclosure pilot and that we are now liaising with all the criminal justice partners in the region as they prepare for implementation.

“I look forward to the pilot being initiated later this year and to the subsequent evaluation of that.

“While we must all rightly be alert to ‘stranger danger’, most sexual offences against children are committed by individuals known to the child’s family - adults who abuse a position of trust with that child.

“This project provides another link which will assist in identifying vulnerable children and families who are unknown to police and care agencies to ensure that correct help and advice are provided.”

Tayside Police Assistant Chief Constable Bill Harkins added: “We are pleased that Tayside Police, along with its community and criminal justice partners, will be responsible for the pilot project.

“We have been working closely with the Scottish Government in advance of the pilot project’s implementation later this year and there is still significant work to be done in advance of this.

“Clearly good partnership working already exists in relation to the management of sex offenders in Tayside and, irrespective of the pilot project, people should always contact the authorities if they have any concerns over the safety of any child in their community.

“Tayside Police successfully piloted the implementation of Fixed Penalty Notices on behalf of the Scottish Government and we will continue to lead where there can be developments in policing that are to the benefit of the wider community.”

Bailie Helen Wright, Convener of Tayside Community Justice Authority, said: “In Tayside we are committed to working in partnership to increase public confidence in the criminal justice system.

“We want to ensure that public protection concerns are at the forefront of our work in managing convicted offenders who may present a risk to others.

“The pilot scheme in Tayside will operate as one part of a range of public protection initiatives in the area, where criminal justice partners work closely together to safeguard our communities. We welcome the fact that the decision to locate the pilot in Tayside acknowledges these strengths.”

## **NOTES FOR NEWS EDITORS**

1. Mr MacAskill announced plans for a pilot scheme on May 3. The News Release can be read at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2009/05/02104703>

2. Under the scheme, parents, carers and guardians of children under-18 will be able to register a child-protection interest in a named individual. This must be someone who has regular unsupervised access to the child.

3. The person registering their interest will be required to confirm that the information they are supplying is correct, and that they understand there may be legal consequences if they have made false claims.
4. There will be a presumption that relevant information will be disclosed if the subject of the disclosure report has convictions for child sex offences, and if it is decided that the disclosure will protect the child.

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