

Are you thinking of going missing?

What is causing you to want to go missing?

Many issues that cause people to go missing, such as financial problems or relationship breakdowns can often be addressed without the need to leave. Often help is available to face these difficulties without having to go missing. However, if you do feel you need to leave, we remain here to help you explore your options and be safe.

Missing People's confidential helpline is open around the clock and we can help you to discuss your options and put you in touch with organisations who can support you. Call or text us on **116 000** to speak with us in total confidence.

A number of organisations who can help to support you in a variety of circumstances can also be found in our guidance sheet entitled **Who can help?** (you can download this from the [Adult Guidance homepage](#)).

Will I be in trouble if I go missing?

If you are 18 years or older you have a legal right to go missing, unless you are detained ('sectioned') under the Mental Health Act, or you are legally in the care of another person. Whilst you will not be in trouble with the police, choosing to go missing may create a range of difficulties in dealing with your accommodation, finances, employment, and relationships.

Will the police look for me?

Whilst adults have a right to go missing, if you are reported missing to the police by your family, friends, employer, landlord or anyone else, the police may search for you. The police's decision will depend on whether they believe you are at risk or in danger. However this does not mean you are in trouble or will be arrested, the police simply wish to be sure you are safe and not at in danger.

You can stop the police searching for you by going to a local police station and confirming your identity and that you are safe and well. They will not disclose your whereabouts to the person who reported you missing if you don't want them to. For further information see our information sheets on **The police investigation** and **How can I stop people**

looking for me? (You can download these from the [Adult Guidance homepage](#)). Also, if you would like us to, we can help you to speak with the police. Contacting us is confidential, so you can talk through your options without identifying yourself or your location.

Practical considerations

If you are thinking of going missing there are a number of practical considerations that it may be helpful to think about before you make a decision. If you wish to discuss your options or any of these practical considerations in greater detail then call or text Missing People's confidential 24 hour helpline on **116 000**, or email us at 116000@missingpeople.org.uk

Do you have a place to stay?

Before leaving you should consider whether you have a safe place to stay in the short and longer term. If you leave your current place of residence for a long period of time you may not be able to return, particularly if you rent your accommodation or it is a housing association property. For further guidance on this issue see [Finding accommodation when missing](#) (forthcoming).

Finances

If you have debt or other financial problems a number of organisations can help you to overcome this. For details of these organisations see **Who can help?** (you can download this from the [Adult Guidance homepage](#)) or call us on **116 000** to discuss any problems you may be facing.

Many of your financial and practical affairs, such as banking, mortgages and insurance, may only be able to be administered by you. This can be a particular problem if you have people who are dependent on you, or if you have joint accounts or mortgages and other contracts with a spouse or partner.

Leaving your financial affairs unresolved can both cause great difficulty to those you leave behind who may depend on your or share contracts with you, and may create a challenging financial situation if you choose to return.

What do you need to take with you?

As well as essential items such as medication, you may find that you need certain documents whilst you are away- this may include a passport or other form of identification.

If you are leaving to escape an unsafe situation at home then it is important to realise that the police will not be able to collect anything you leave behind. They will however accompany you back to your residence if you ask them to do so. If you are leaving to escape an unsafe situation you can contact the police or Missing People who will ensure you have the support and protection you need.

This guidance has been produced with the kind assistance of the Missing Persons Bureau

116 000 is the number for advice, support, help and options if you, or someone you care about goes missing. Call or text the charity Missing People on 116 000 - it's free, 24 hour and confidential.

You can also email us at 116000@missingpeople.org.uk for advice and support.

The police investigation

Why are the police looking for me?

Adults over the age of 18 have a right to go missing, unless they have been detained ('sectioned') under the Mental Health Act, or are legally in the care of another person. However if you are reported missing, the police have a legal obligation to ensure that you are safe. To do this, they need to make contact with you and ensure you are safe and are not at risk of coming to any harm. The police do not want to force you to go home, they simply want to make sure you are safe and well.

What will the police do to look for me?

The extent of the police search and the way they conduct their investigation will depend on how much risk or danger they believe you to be at. If you have gone missing in what they consider suspicious or unexplained circumstances and are worried about your safety, the search may be quite broad and could include a detailed search of the area from which you left. In other situations, where the police do not believe you to be at risk their search may be less active.

In either case, the police may ask Missing People to make and distribute posters to be displayed in the area that you went missing from or an area they think you may have gone to, they may also launch their own appeals.

To read more about how to stop the police and Missing People searching for you please read our guidance sheet [How can I stop people looking for me?](#) (You can download this from the [Adult Guidance homepage](#)).

How can I stop the police looking for me?

The police will close their investigations once they have ensured that you are safe and not in danger. In order to do this the police must undertake a Safe and Well Check. They will not close their investigation until they are satisfied that this has been completed.

Safe and Well checks can often be quick and simple. If you are an adult, and not in the legal care of someone else, you may simply be able to walk into a police station front office or call the police on their non-emergency number 101 to arrange to meet the police somewhere for them to do their check. Remember, being missing does not mean you are in trouble with the police. For further information on safe and well checks please read our

guidance sheet [How can I stop people looking for me?](#) (you can download this from the [Adult Guidance homepage](#)).

Will I be arrested or in trouble?

Going missing is not an offence and is a legal right for adults over the age of 18 (unless detained ('sectioned') under the Mental Health Act, or legally in the care of another person) therefore if you are not wanted for a crime the police will not arrest you, they will simply wish to ensure you are safe so that they can stop looking for you.

What if I am wanted for a crime?

If you have committed a crime before or during the time when you went missing, the police may need to talk to you about this. However in some circumstances the police may consider their concern for you as a missing person to outweigh their wish to speak to you about any offence you may have committed. This will depend on your individual circumstances and the particular offence.

If you are concerned the police may arrest you if you call in to a police station, Missing People can connect you to a three-way call so you can speak with a police officer who may be able to advise you what action the police are likely to take. All three-way calls are entirely confidential and neither the police nor Missing People will be able to trace your call.

Will the police tell my family?

If your family has reported you missing the police will inform them that they have spoken with you and performed a safe and well check. The police will explain that they have had contact with you and they have therefore closed their missing person investigation. The objective of the police is not to force you to go home; it is simply to ensure that you are safe and well. They will not tell your family where you are or where you have been if you don't want them to. If you wish to pass a message on to your family, the police may be able to do this. Missing People can also pass messages between you and your family via our confidential [Message Home](#) service.

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How can I stop people looking for me?

Why are the police and/or Missing People looking for me?

Whilst adults have a right to go missing, if you have been reported as missing to the police they have a duty to ensure that you are safe. If you are over 18 (and not detained ('sectioned') under the Mental Health Act, or legally in the care of another person) the police will respect your right to go missing. In this case, the police will not tell anyone where you are or force you to return to where you left, they will simply wish to ensure you are safe and are not in danger.

Missing People may be looking for you at the request of the police or your family. We will only distribute posters with the consent of the police.

How can I stop the police looking for me?

The police will close their investigations once they have ensured that you are safe and not at risk of harm. In order to do this the police must undertake a Safe and Well Check. They will not close their investigation until they are satisfied that this has been completed.

If you know you have been reported missing and want to tell the police to stop looking for you, we can talk you through the process of presenting at a police station. If you would like to ask some questions about your situation first then we can connect you to a police station on a three way call and help you speak to someone who can answer your questions.

Safe and Well Checks

The purpose of a Safe and Well Check is to look for any indications that a person has suffered harm whilst they have been away and make sure they are not in danger. Once the police are happy that this is the case, they can close their investigations without telling anyone where you are if you do not want them to.

In practice, a Safe and Well Check simply requires you to present yourself at a local police station with identification. Providing you are safe and are not at risk the police will simply wish to take a few basic details so they can close their investigation. Remember, the police will not disclose your whereabouts to anyone if you do not want them to.

If you think you may be wanted by the police in connection to an offence you are accused of committing, and are concerned about this, please see our further guidance on [The police investigation](#) (you can download this from the [Adult Guidance homepage](#)).

How can I stop my poster being distributed and displayed by Missing People?

Missing People only publicises cases where a person has been reported missing to the police. Therefore if you wish us to end our publicity, the police need to see that you are safe and well. Once the police have closed their case, our publicity will automatically stop and anyone displaying a poster will be contacted and asked to take it down immediately. If you want to talk to us about this because you have seen yourself on one of our appeals, then get in touch. We can talk you through how this works and we won't expect you to tell us who or where you are.

How can Missing People help?

Our helpline is open around the clock, simply call, email or text **116 000** to speak to us in complete confidence. As well as providing general support and advice on your options we can, if you wish, connect you on a three way call to a police officer where you can discuss your situation.

We can also pass a message home to your family to tell them you are safe but do not wish to return at this time. This may stop them from trying to search for you if you do not wish to be found. We can do this confidentially – we will not pass on any information you do not wish us to share.

We will never pressure you to do anything you don't feel ready to do, but we can always provide you with support and information allowing you to make an informed decision about what to do next.

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Who can help?

People go missing or consider going missing for many different reasons- it can be a choice, to remove yourself from a relationship breakdown or financial problems, or it can be unintentional, drifting apart from your family over a number of years.

Whatever the reason for you going missing or considering leaving, there are a number of organisations that can provide support to help address the difficulties which may have caused you to find yourself in this situation.

Missing People provide advice, support, help and options if you, or someone you care about goes missing. Call or text us on **116 000** or email 116000@missingpeople.org.uk - it's free, 24 hour and confidential. Whilst we can always help you to explore your options, you may also find some of the other organisations listed here to be helpful.

Relationship problems

If you are having relationship problems at home- either with a partner or other family members- there are organisations that may be able to help.

National Health Service (NHS)

Individuals, couples and families can refer to the NHS for counselling and psychological support.

Tel: **0845 46 47** (24 hours) (Up to 5p per minute if calling from a BT landline. Charges from mobiles or other landline providers may vary)

Web: www.nhs.uk/conditions/counselling/Pages/Introduction.aspx

Relate

Relate offers advice, relationship counselling, sex therapy, workshops, mediation, consultations and support face-to-face for individuals and couples with relationship difficulties. Whilst Relate charges for their services, a number of free resources can be downloaded from their website.

Tel: **08451 30 40 16** (Monday- Thursday 8.00am - 10.00pm, Friday 8.00am- 5.00pm and Saturday 9.00am- 6.00pm) (Up to 5p per minute if calling from a BT landline. Charges from mobiles or other landline providers may vary)

Web: www.relate.org.uk

Financial problems

If you have left or are thinking of leaving due to debts or other financial problems there are a number of organisations who will be able to help you free of charge, and provide you with the advice and support you need to find a solution.

Citizens Advice Bureau

Citizens Advice Bureaux can provide help with a variety of financial issues. They provide extensive online guidance, face-to-face help at local branches throughout the UK, and telephone support.

England

Tel: **08444 111 444** (Up to 5p per minute if calling from a BT landline. Charges from mobiles or other landline providers may vary).

Web: www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Wales

Tel: **08444 772 020** (Up to 5p per minute if calling from a BT landline. Charges from mobiles or other landline providers may vary).

Web: www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Scotland

Web: www.cas.org.uk

Northern Ireland

Web: www.citizensadvice.co.uk

StepChange Debt Charity

StepChange Debt Charity is a charitable organisation which provides debt and money management advice through a free and anonymous service.

Tel: **0800 138 1111** (Mon-Fri 8am-8pm; Sat 9am-3pm. Freephone, including from mobiles).

Web: www.stepchange.org

DirectGov

This Government website has practical information on a range of financial topics, including managing money, benefits and debt.

Tel: DirectGov run a series of freephone helplines, open Monday- Friday 8.00am- 8.00pm and Saturdays 8.00am- 4.00pm unless otherwise stated.

Tax credits: **0845 300 3900**

Child benefits: **0845 302 1444**

Income tax: 0845 300 0627

Bereavement: 0845 300 0627

Probate and inheritance tax: 0845 302 0900 (Monday- Friday 9.00am- 5.00pm) (Up to 5p per minute if calling from a BT landline. Charges from mobiles or other landline providers may vary)

Web: www.direct.gov.uk/en/MoneyTaxAndBenefits/index.htm

Money Made Clear

This organisation seeks to help with financial matters by giving clear, unbiased financial advice to help people make informed choices.

Tel: 0300 500 5000 (Monday- Friday 8.00am- 6.00pm) (charged at the same rate as local landline numbers)

Web: www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/

The England Illegal Money Lending Team

This organisation investigates and prosecutes illegal lending and any related activity. They run a 24/7 hour confidential hotline for people to report illegal lending to trained investigators.

Tel: 0300 555 2222 (24 hours) (charged at the same rate as local landline numbers)

Text: 'Loan shark (+ your message)' to 60003

E-mail: reportaloanshark@stoploansharks.gov.uk

Mental Health

A number of mental health issues, including depression, may have led you to leave, or consider leaving, your family and friends. Speak to your GP about the options open to you, alternatively NHS Choices has an extensive list of organisations that can provide you with support and resources to overcome these difficulties.

<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/mentalhealth/Pages/Helplines.aspx>

Samaritans

Samaritans provides confidential emotional support 24/7 to those experiencing despair, distress or suicidal feelings.

Tel: 08457 90 90 90 (Up to 5p per minute if calling from a BT landline. Charges from mobiles or other landline providers may vary)

E-mail: jo@samaritans.org

Web: www.samaritans.org

SANEline

SANE runs a national, out-of-hours helpline offering specialist emotional support and information to anyone affected by mental illness, including family, friends and carers.

Tel: **0845 767 8000** (6pm- 11pm, 7 days per week) (Up to 5p per minute if calling from a BT landline. Charges from mobiles or other landline providers may vary)

Web: www.sane.org.uk

Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM)

The campaign against living miserably (CALM) was set up to reduce the high suicide rate amongst men under 35. It is a campaign and charity targeting young men with a helpline, magazine and online community, but CALM listens to *anyone* who needs help or support.

Tel (nationwide): **0800 58 58 58** (5pm- midnight Sat- Tues) (free from landlines, charges from mobile phones may vary)

Tel (London): **0800 802 5858** (5pm- midnight Sat- Tues) (free from landlines, charges from mobile phones may vary)

Text (London): **07537 404117**

Web: www.thecalmzone.net

Drug and alcohol abuse

Problems with drugs and alcohol can lead to people drifting away from family and friends, there are a number of organisations who can provide advice and support if you find yourself in this situation.

Alcoholics Anonymous

Tel: **0845 769 7555** (24 hours) (Up to 5p per minute if calling from a BT landline. Charges from mobiles or other landline providers may vary)

Email: help@alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

Web: www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

Narcotics Anonymous

Tel: **0300 999 1212** (24 hours) (charged at the same rate as local landline numbers)

Web: www.ukna.org

Domestic violence

If you are running away from abuse you may consider contacting the police. In addition, the following organisations may be able to provide advice and support.

National Domestic Violence Helpline

The Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline, run in partnership between

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Women's Aid and Refuge, is a national service for women experiencing domestic violence, their family, friends, colleagues and others calling on their behalf.

Tel: **0808 200 247** (24 hours) (free from landlines, charges from mobile phones may vary)

Website: <http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk/>

MALE (Men's Advice Line and Enquiries)

MALE provide a range of services for men experiencing domestic abuse.

Tel: 0808 801 0327 (Monday - Friday 10am-1pm and 2pm-5pm) (free from landlines, charges from mobile phones may vary)

Email: info@mensadviceline.org.uk

Web: www.mensadviceline.org.uk

If you have been the victim of a crime

Victim Support

Victim Support are a national charity giving free and confidential help to victims of crime, witnesses, their family, friends and anyone else affected across England and Wales.

Tel: **0845 30 30 900** (24 hours) (Up to 5p per minute if calling from a BT landline. Charges from mobiles or other landline providers may vary)

Email: supportline@victimsupport.org.uk

Website: www.victimsupport.org

Drifting out of contact

If you have drifted out of contact with family members due to moving house or changing your contact details and no longer know where they are and how to get in touch, there are a number of services that can help you. Missing People may be able to help reconnect you with your relatives, to access this service please call or text **116 000** or email 116000@missingpeople.org.uk In addition, the following services may be able to help you.

People Tracer

People Tracer searches both past and present edited Electoral Roll and its People Tracer Register database. All People Tracer Register records will contain the person's name and address. People Tracer charges a fee for this service.

Tel: **0800 001 5856** (free from landlines, charges from mobile phones may vary)

Email: info@peopletracer.co.uk

Web: www.peopletracer.co.uk

The Salvation Army Family Tracing Service

The Salvation Army will trace family members (including husband and wives, but not friends or partners) and will search for someone if you have been out touch for many years. They require a full name and date of birth. The Salvation Army has offices all over the world.

Tel: **0845 634 4747** (Monday- Friday 8.15am to 3.45pm) (Up to 5p per minute if calling from a BT landline. Charges from mobiles or other landline providers may vary)

Web: www.salvationarmy.org.uk/familytracing

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Reconnecting with family, friends and carers

Whilst we realise reconnecting may not always be an option, at some point you may choose to re-establish contact with the family, friends or carers you left behind. This may not mean returning home and meeting face to face, it could simply mean sending a letter or making a phone call to say you are safe and will make contact again when you are ready.

Although reconnecting may not be easy, Missing People is here to support you at every point in the reconnection process. Call or text us in confidence on **116 000**, 24 hours a day, or email us at 116000@missingpeople.org.uk

Passing a message home

Returning home and reconnecting with those you left behind can be difficult. You may have left because of strained relationships at home, or you may be concerned that your relationships may have deteriorated whilst you have been away.

If making direct contact with those you left behind feels too daunting, or you are concerned about how they might react, Missing People can help your reconnection by passing a message home between you and your loved one or carer. This may allow you to begin to communicate and reconnect without worrying about receiving a negative reaction.

We can also connect you to others aside from family or carers. For example, we can help you contact a social worker, community psychiatric nurse, hospital staff or other professionals.

If you do not know the contact details of your family

If you have been out of contact for an extended period of time and no longer have contact details for your family, Missing People may be able to help establish their address and initiate contact through our [Lost Contact Tracing Service](#). Other organisations that can help in this situation are listed in the information sheet entitled [Who can help?](#) (you can download this from the [Adult Guidance homepage](#)).

Practical difficulties

Returning home may also raise a number of practical difficulties- some of which

may have been apparent when you left, and others of which may have developed or worsened whilst you were away. Missing People and other organisations are able to help you work through any practical problems you may face. Call Missing People on **116 000** or read our guidance on [Who can help?](#) (you can download this from the [Adult Guidance homepage](#)).

Finances

You may return to a difficult financial position, due to debts incurred either before or during you being away. Whilst this may seem daunting there are many organisations that can help you to begin to address any financial problems you may have. Our guidance entitled [Who can help?](#) (you can download this from the [Adult Guidance homepage](#)) lists a number of organisations who can help you to address your debt problems and overcome them.

Housing

If you have left your accommodation and have not kept up rental or mortgage payments you may find yourself without a place to stay. Our guidance on [Missing and housing](#) (forthcoming) provides information on your options for finding accommodation.

Missing People is here to help

If you are considering reconnecting with family or carers then Missing People is here to help.

Call, email or text **116 000** for confidential, round the clock support and advice. We can listen to any concerns you may have and answer your questions about the practical or emotional aspects of reconnecting with your friends and family.

If you are unsure about whether you wish to reconnect, or are worried about the response you might get from your loved ones, Missing People can pass a message home to them. We can help you find the right words and if you do not wish to disclose your current location you do not have to.

If you wish to pass a message you will need to be able to provide some information that will prove your identity to the person we are passing the message too, such as date of birth or other memorable information. We will contact your family and ask if they are willing to receive a message from you, they will also be given an option to pass a message back to you. We will ask you if you are willing to receive a message back.

We will not pass abusive or harmful messages between family members, and we will not pass messages regarding legal or financial matters.

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