

# Missing People Family Feedback Survey 2013

*"I can't sing your praises enough. You showed so much empathy. You offered more than I thought you could offer. You took a lot of the pressure off me."*

Missing People is committed to listening to, and learning from, people who use the charity's services. In line with the Service User Involvement Strategy 2010, Missing People conducts an annual survey with families who had reported a family member missing to the charity. This report outlines the main findings and recommendations.

*"I just wish they would find him, that's all I would wish for."*

## Key Points

- Two hundred and six family members of missing and formerly missing adults and children were surveyed from January to March 2013. They were mostly women aged over 35 years looking for male relatives. Three-quarters (76 per cent) had also received services from the police, and more than half (54 per cent) had experienced mental health problems as a result of having a family member missing.
- The charity's ability to meet users' expectations is the highest ever recorded, with 72 per cent of respondents reporting that their expectations had been 'completely met' or 'exceeded'.
- Once again, issues around case resolution were raised, and families have pointed to a need for support or guidance once their missing relative is found.
- The most commonly requested new services were post-closure support and advocacy services.
- Overall satisfaction with the charity's services continues to be high across a range of measures and, although this year's survey has found a slightly lower overall level of satisfaction, a broader balance of satisfaction appears to be emerging over time.
- There was a nine per cent increase from last year in those experiencing mental health concerns as an impact of having a missing relative.
- More service users are being referred to Missing People from the police than last year (36 per cent up from 33 per cent in 2012).

*"Just a very big thank you for all the hard work and support!"*

## 1. About the survey

*“I want to reiterate how enormously comforting I found your services”*

The survey’s main aims are:

- To gather information directly from families, about their experiences, in a confidential way.
- To measure families’ satisfaction with Missing People.
- To measure changes in satisfaction over time.
- To find out what new services families would like to be provided.

In 2013 there were 453 eligible<sup>1</sup> families in the sample, of whom 206 (45 per cent) fully completed the questionnaire between 9<sup>th</sup> January and 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2013. Surveys were conducted mainly by telephone (180, 87 per cent) with a smaller number (26, 13 per cent) completed online.

The survey is conducted with families who had their first contact with the charity in the previous calendar year and families can only take part in the survey once. This means that the findings represent a snapshot of families in each given year, but does not measure the change in each family’s experience or opinion over time.

The project was developed and overseen by Missing People’s Research Manager. Telephone surveys were conducted by a team of four interviewers drawn from volunteers within the charity’s Services team. They were trained for the paid role and supported by an Admin Assistant.

This was the second time the online version of the questionnaire has been made available. People contacted by telephone were able to request the online version as an alternative to a telephone interview, and the online questionnaire was also sent to all eligible families for whom Missing People does not have a UK telephone number, and to people who were not successfully contacted by telephone during the fieldwork period.

Some questions were not asked of the online respondents, for reasons of length and appropriateness. Where this was the case, analyses are based on the number of people who were asked the question (i.e. 180 telephone responses). One hundred and twenty-three emails were sent, of which 16 people took part anonymously and eight included their names.

After taking part in the survey, 24 people requested a call back from the Services team to discuss their case. All were offered this service.

---

1. In order to be eligible to take part the charity must have a UK telephone number or email address for a family contact. Missing person cases are also excluded from the survey sample if there is an ongoing criminal investigation, if the missing person is wanted for police or immigration investigation, or if the missing person has requested that Missing People does not inform their family that they have been in contact.

## 2. Findings

*“We were in such a state. It was a godsend that the charity made contact with us to help”*

### **Who took part?**

- One hundred and fifty-one (73 per cent) of the family members who took part were female compared to 55 (27 per cent) male. The proportion of women taking part is slightly lower than 2012 (74 per cent) and lower still than 2011 (77 per cent).
- One hundred and thirty-five (66 per cent) participants were aged 35-64 years while the rest were split between under 35s (18 per cent) and over 65s (16 per cent). Twenty-seven per cent of all participants were women aged between 45 and 54 years.
- The most common relationships between the family members who took part in the survey and the missing people were:
  - mothers looking for sons (n=41, 20%);
  - mothers looking for daughters (n=28, 14%);
  - sisters looking for brothers (n=23, 11%);
  - brothers looking for brothers (n=15, 7%)
  - wives looking for husbands (n=19, 9%); and
  - fathers looking for sons (n=12, 6%).
- Eighty-four (41 per cent) respondents had children aged under 18 years living in their home. The total number of children living with respondents was at least 159.
- Seventy-eight per cent of respondents identified themselves as white, which is slightly lower than UK-wide proportions<sup>2</sup>. Nine per cent of respondents identified themselves as black or black British and nine per cent as Asian or Asian British. English was the main language spoken at home in 90 per cent of the households. Other languages reported by respondents were: Bulgarian, Czech, German, Greek, Gujarati, Polish, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Turkish, Urdu and Welsh.
- Thirty-three per cent of respondents rent from a council or housing association, 27 per cent own their home with a mortgage, and 20 per cent own their homes outright. Sixteen per cent rent privately.
- Financially, 36 per cent felt they were ‘just about getting by’ (40 per cent in 2012), 25 per cent are finding it ‘quite difficult’ or ‘very difficult’ (20 per cent in 2012) whilst 36 per cent are ‘doing alright’ or ‘living comfortably’ (38 per cent in 2012).
- Eighty-four per cent of all respondents had internet access at home, up from 83% in 2012 and 78% in 2011. Eighty-two per cent had access to an email address they can use for personal email, stable from 2012, and up from 74% in 2011. Half of all respondents used social media such as Facebook and Twitter, slightly down from 54% in 2012 and up from 39% in 2011.

---

2. <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/population-trends-rd/population-trends/no--145--autumn-2011/jrd-population-trends-145.pdf>

## Who are the missing people?

*“My son said he didn't realise he had been missing that long. After I hugged him, I said “I just want to knock your bloody head off”*

- The majority of missing people were male (143 people, 69 per cent); nearly one-third were female (62 people, 30 per cent) (The remaining respondent did not disclose the gender of their missing relative).
- Close to half (88 people, 43 per cent) of all respondents' missing family members were men aged between 25 and 54 years.

## Accessing Missing People

*“I thank you so much for all your support - even just to speak to you it helped a lot... so much you just don't know”*

- Around one-third of respondents (36 per cent) found out about the charity from the police. Twenty-seven per cent found the charity via the internet (down from 34 per cent in 2012), 15 per cent through word of mouth and four per cent found out about the charity on television.

*“It was just a blur. I was referred to you by the police.”*

- Sixty-six per cent had used Missing People's website (an increase from 58 per cent in 2012), most (but not all) of whom have internet access at home.

**Table 1: Reasons for visiting the Missing People website [www.missingpeople.org.uk](http://www.missingpeople.org.uk)**

Reason for visiting the website	Number	Percentage
To find out about the charity's services	107	52%
To find contact details	91	44%
To view a missing person appeal	49	24%
To download a missing person poster	14	7%
To download Guidance for Families	25	12%
To make a donation	14	7%
Had never looked at the website	71	34%

\*Columns are not additive because respondents could report more than one impact.

- In December 2011 Missing People responded to previous Family Feedback Survey recommendations by creating a suite of guidance for families of missing people, available to download from the website<sup>3</sup>. Of the 25 respondents who had downloaded this guidance, 20 found the guidance useful, and 4 found it somewhat useful.

---

3. This can be found at [www.missingpeople.org.uk/familyguidance](http://www.missingpeople.org.uk/familyguidance).

## **About the search**

### ***“Thought it would be quite easy to find him - but it wasn't”***

- One hundred and twenty nine family members (63 per cent) who took part in the survey reported that their missing family member had been found alive and 67 (33 per cent) that the person was still missing. A further 10 people (five per cent) who took part reported that their family member had been found to have died while missing. (Percentages do not total 100% because of rounding).

### ***“I knew my husband had killed himself, so I knew he would be a body”***

- Eighty-three per cent (115) of those whose missing relative had been found alive (129) had contact with their found family member whilst in 10 per cent (14) cases the missing person had chosen not to resume contact.

### ***“I looked at your stats on missing people and it helped prepare me for the outcome of the case. It helped put things in perspective.”***

- Of the 129 people had been found alive, 43 per cent had been missing more than once. Six per cent (7) of these had been missing between 11 and 20 times.

### ***“I felt abandoned. It is not fully resolved. Even though we are back in touch, we do not know where he is living. The case appears to be closed - I and my husband feel in limbo”***

- Seventy-six per cent of all respondents had reported their family member missing to the police. Sixty-seven per cent of police reports were made within 48 hours.
- Fifty-six per cent felt that the charity had added ‘a great deal’ to the police service (53 per cent in 2012, 52 per cent in 2011). Overall 77 per cent felt that Missing People had added value to the services the police were able to offer (79 per cent in 2012 and 2011).

### ***“Missing People helped me bridge the gap between me and the police and helped me become more patient with the police.”***

## **Initial expectations**

### ***“For someone to listen and guide us in how best to trace our child.”***

- A total of 72 per cent of respondents said their expectations had been exceeded or completely met (up from 69 per cent in 2012, 64 per cent in 2011, 65 per cent in 2010).

Figure 1 overleaf shows the extent to which families whose cases have been resolved, and families whose relative remains missing, feel their expectations have been met.

**Table 2: How well respondents' expectations had been met, by missing person's status**

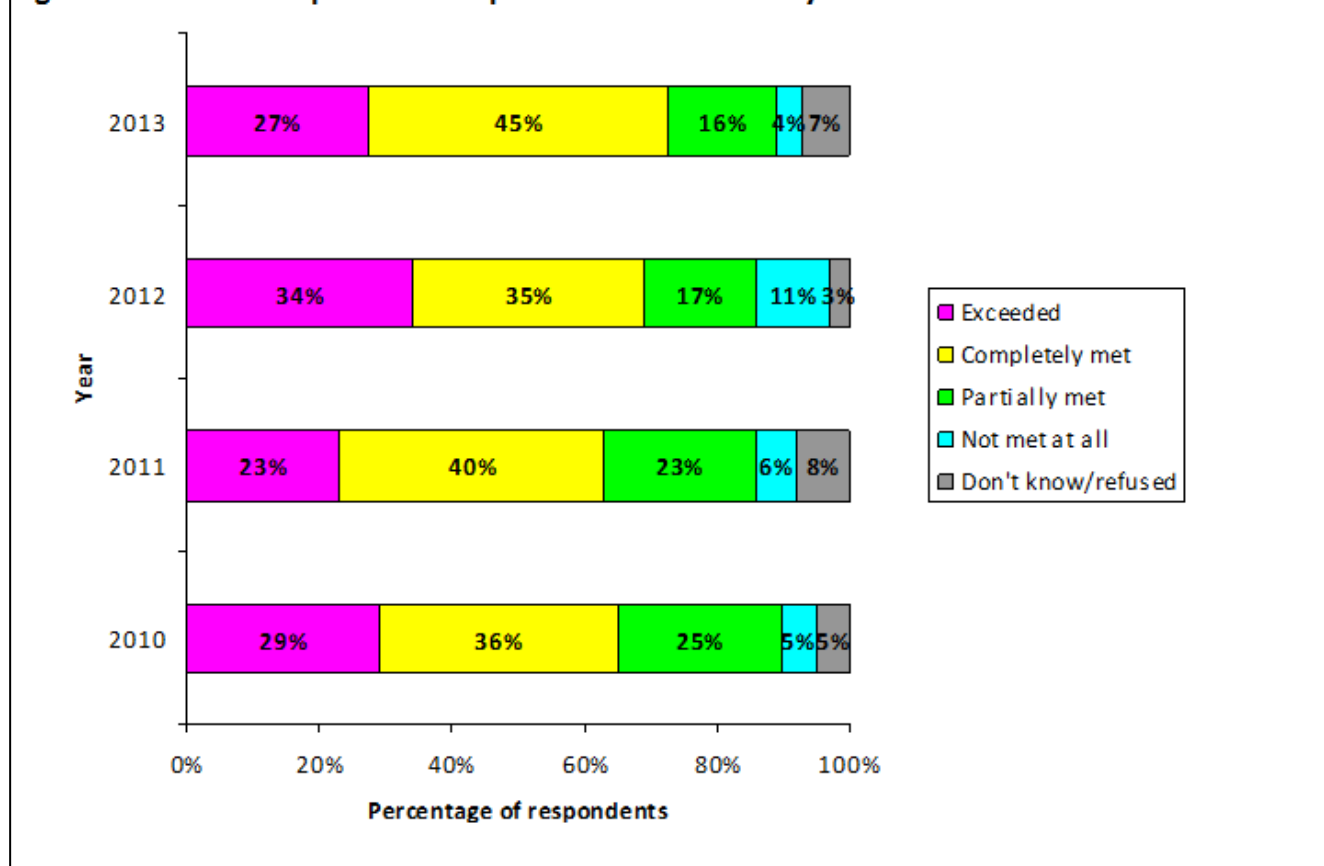
	Found (n)	Found (%)	Still missing (n)	Still missing (%)	Total (n)	Total (%)
<b>Exceeded</b>	46	33%	10	15%	56	27%
<b>Completely met</b>	64	46%	29	43%	93	45%
<b>Partially met</b>	14	10%	19	28%	33	16%
<b>Not met</b>	1	1%	7	10%	8	4%
<b>Don't know or refused</b>	14	10%	2	3%	16	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>100%*</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Column does not sum to 100% because of rounding

*"I thought Missing People would tell me where my daughter was because she was vulnerable. I wanted an intervention."*

Figure 1 below shows how well respondents' expectations were met in each of the 4 years of the annual survey.

**Figure 1: How well respondents' expectations of the charity were met**



*"After reading your website I expected support and help with publicity. I also thought I could receive help with physically searching for my sister"*

Overall, the responses suggest that, while the outcome of the case has some relationship to whether family members feel their expectations have been met, it is still possible for the charity to exceed families' expectations even when their relative remains missing.

### **Publicity**

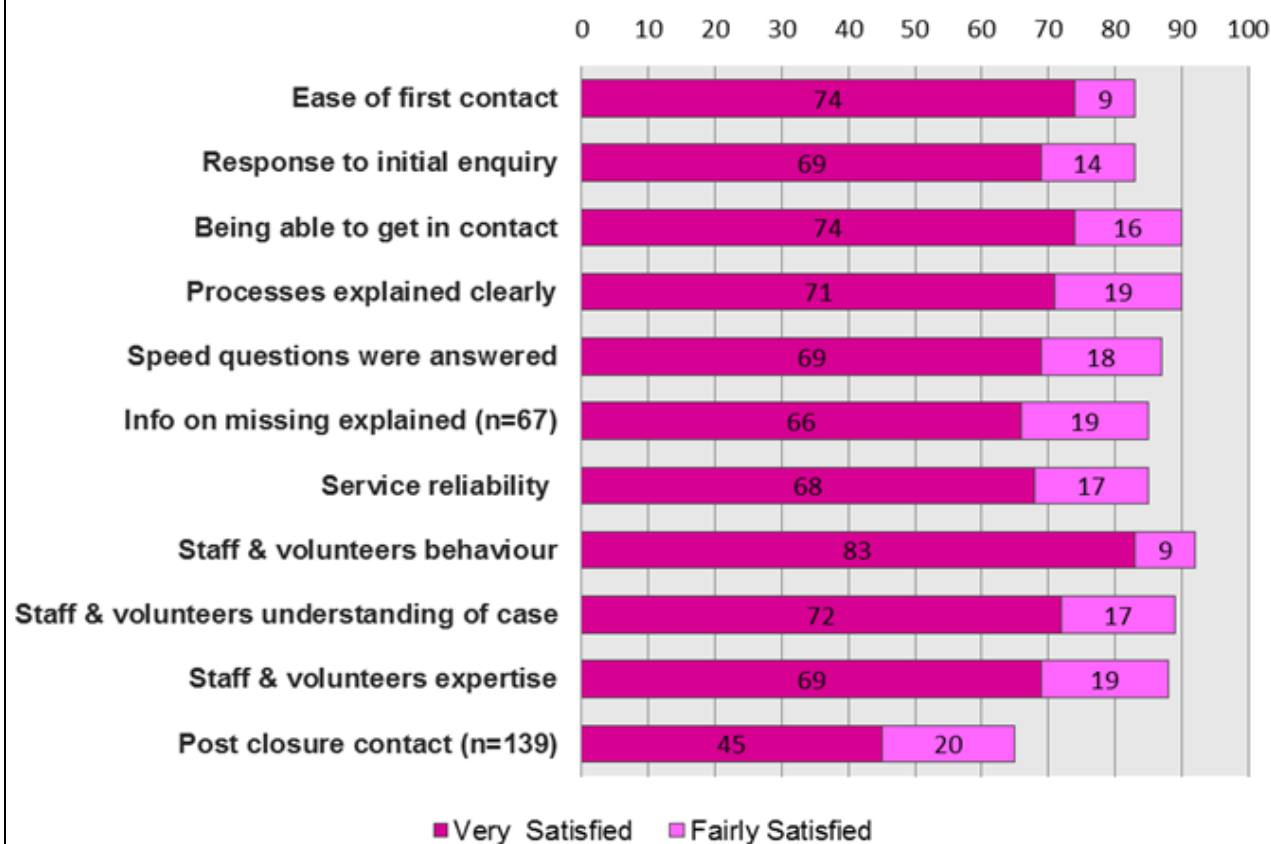
- Ninety-four (46%) respondents reported that there was a publicity appeal for their missing relative. In 58 of these families, the missing person had subsequently been found alive. Of those 58 families, 32 respondents believed that the publicity had influenced the outcome of the disappearance.
- 33 respondents reported that their family had arranged publicity themselves, 33 said the police had arranged publicity, and Missing People had arranged publicity for 70.
- Forty-four respondents (47% of those who had received publicity) reported that their relative's appeal had received about the amount of publicity they had expected. Fourteen (15%) received less than they had expected, and 36 (38%) received more than expected.
- 32 people thought that the publicity had directly affected the outcome of the disappearance.

### **Satisfaction**

*“Everyone I spoke to has been absolutely lovely. If they couldn't answer, they always went to someone and came back to me.”*

Figure 2 overleaf shows the percentage of family members who were 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with aspects of the charity's services.

**Figure 2: Percentage of respondents\* who were 'Very' or 'Fairly' satisfied with each aspect of service**



\*N=206 unless otherwise stated

*“Expectations haven't been met yet because my son is still missing.”*

Satisfaction once again provided a mixed picture in the 2013 results. The general trend is downwards compared to 2012 with markedly lower scores emerging in some areas. However as a wider picture of satisfaction emerges (this being the fourth annual survey) it seems a balance point is being found over time with several scores exceeding 2012 and, in general, satisfaction remains high. Figure 3 below compares this year's satisfaction results with the previous three.

Four aspects are the lowest scores yet recorded by the survey:

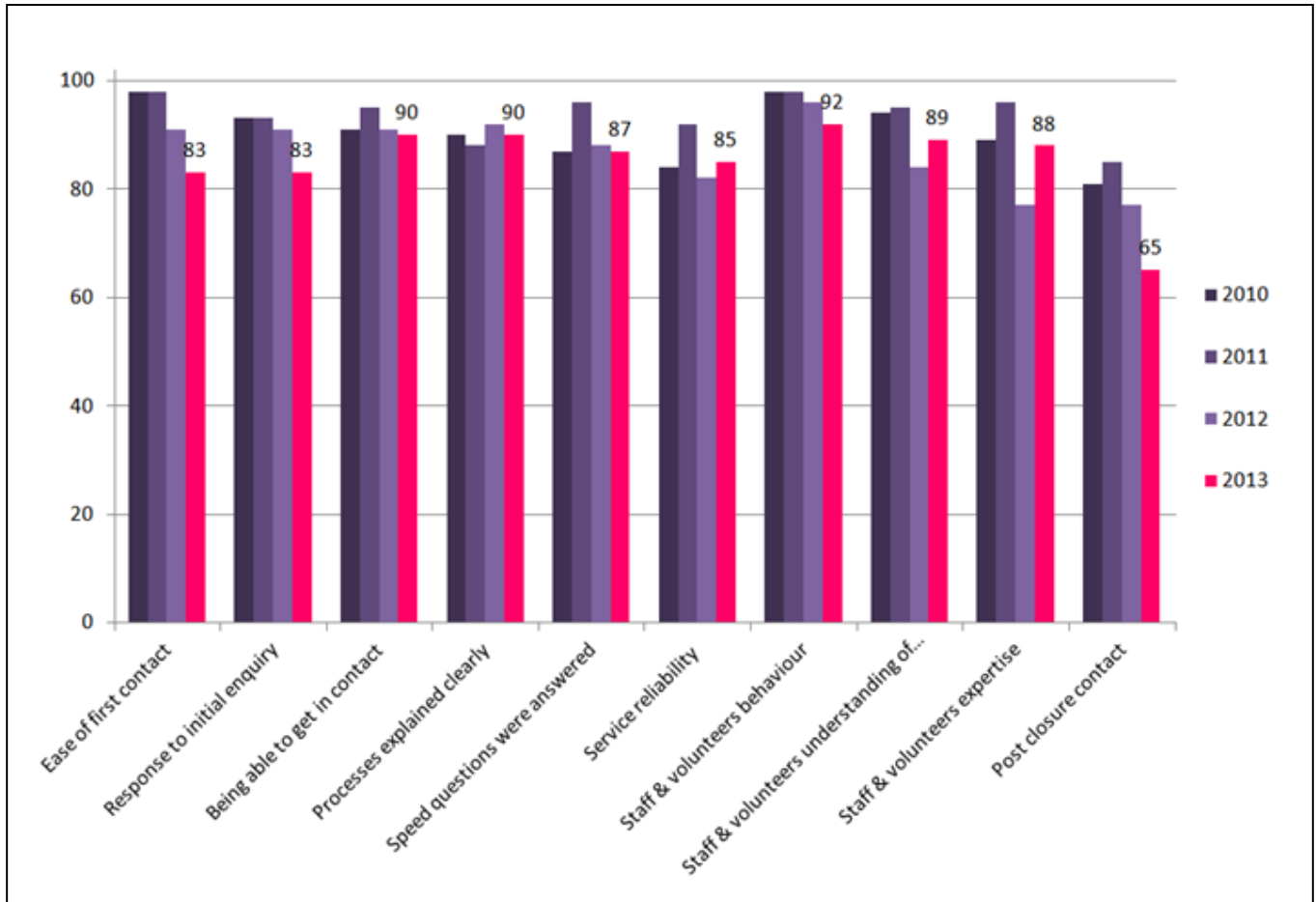
- Ease of first contact – 83% (98% in both 2010 and 2011).
- Response to initial enquiry – 83% (93% in both 2010 and 2011).
- Being able to get in contact - 90% (reaching 95% in 2011).
- Post-closure contact - 65% (peaking at 85% in 2011).

Three aspects have a higher satisfaction rating in 2013 compared to 2012:

- Service reliability – 85% (82% in 2012, 92% in 2011).
- Staff and volunteers understanding of case - 89% (84% in 2012, 95% in 2010).
- Staff and volunteers expertise – 88% (77% in 2012, 96% in 2011).



Figure 3: Satisfaction Percentage Score 2010-2013



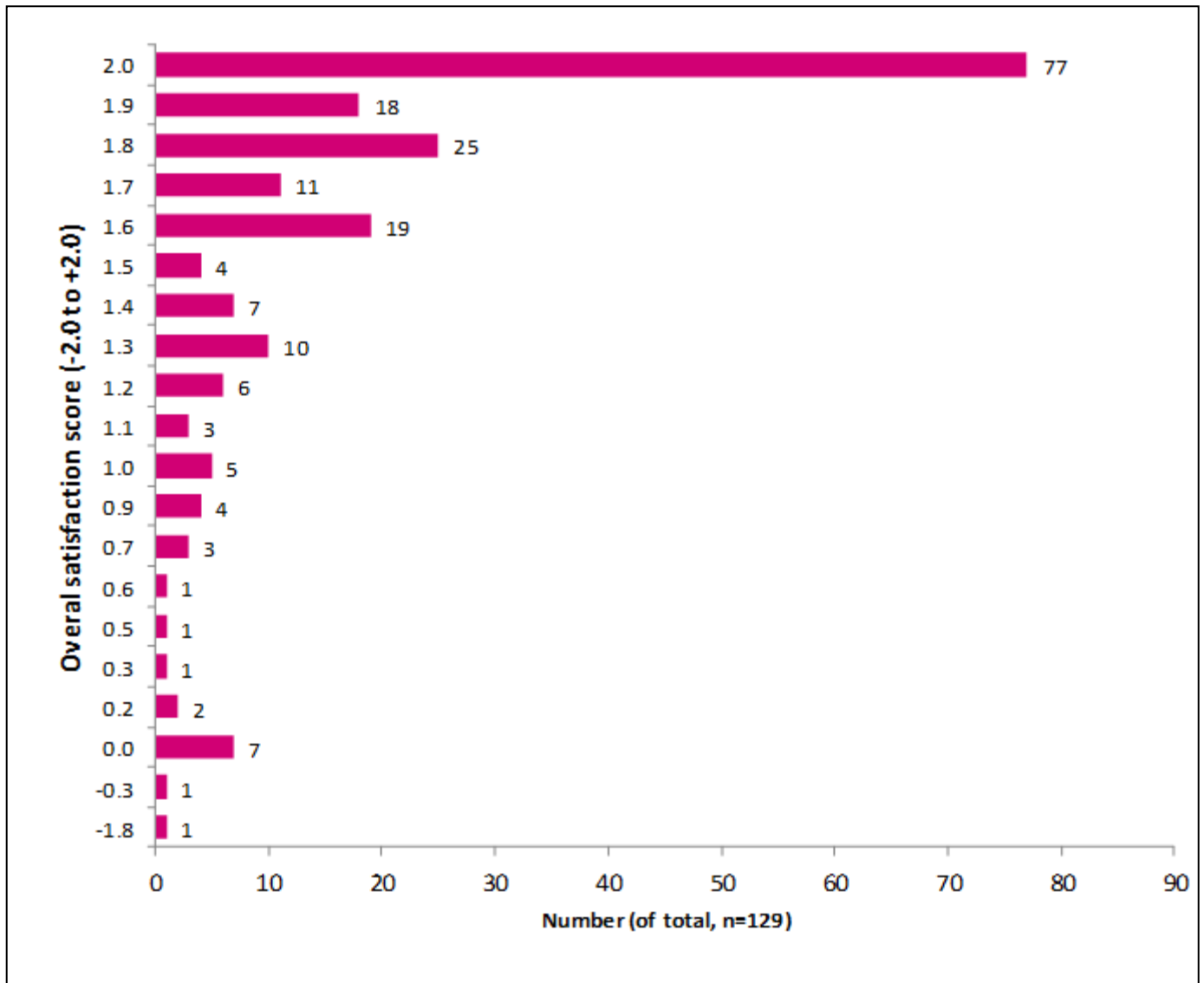
*“Felt so good when I spoke to you. There's help”*

*“I felt abandoned. It is not fully resolved. Even though we are back at touch, we do not know where he is living. The case appears to be closed, and I & my husband feel in limbo.”*

### Overall satisfaction

A composite score was created as a measure of respondents' overall satisfaction with the charity. Figure 4 below shows the distribution of these composite scores across all respondents.

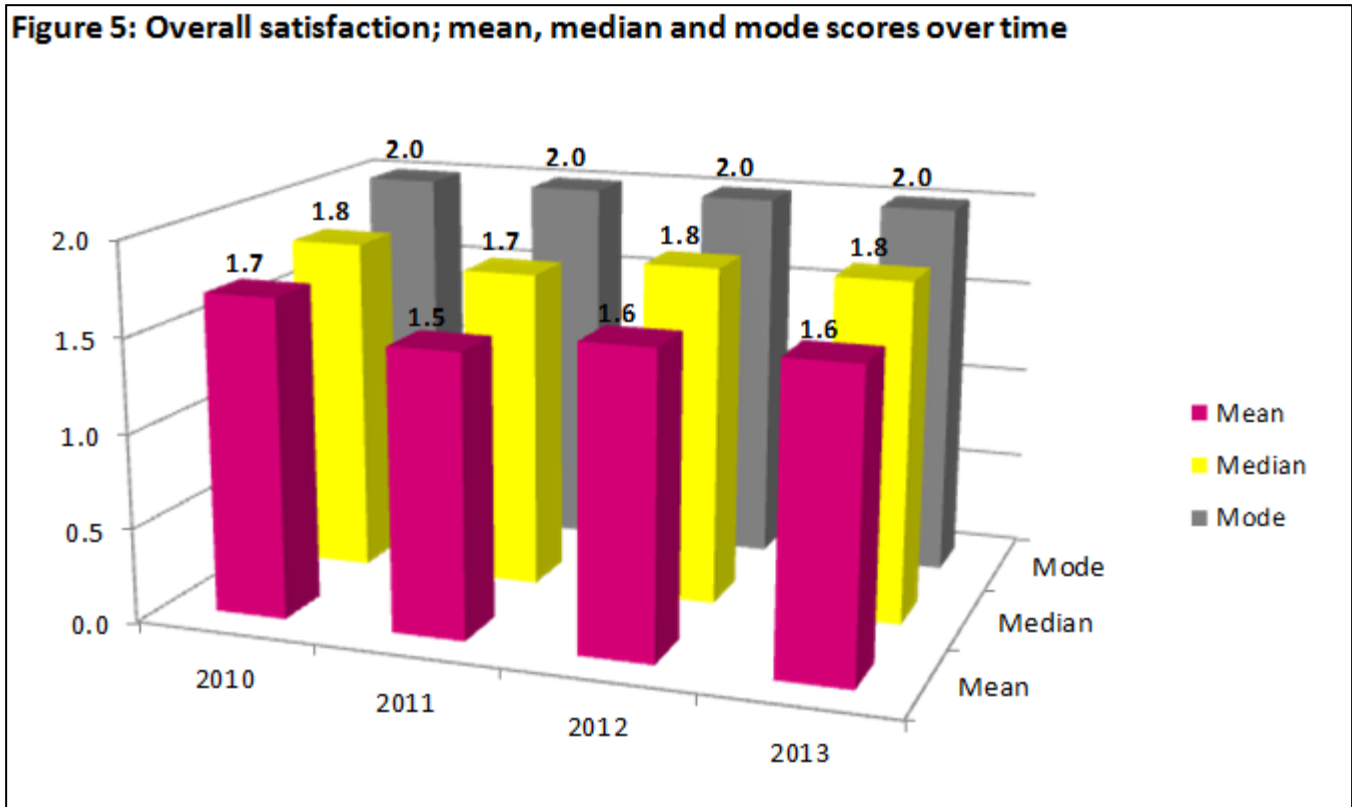
Figure 4: Respondents' overall satisfaction scores



### Changes in satisfaction over time

Each year, family members whose case was opened in the previous calendar year have taken part in the survey. Each respondent takes part only once. This means that we cannot measure an individual's changing satisfaction over time. Rather, we can review how snapshots of different years differ from each other.

Figure 5 below shows the mean, median and mode satisfaction scores in the three sweeps of the annual survey. The mode (most common) score remains the maximum +2.0. The median has remained reasonably stable, regaining the 2010 figure in 2012. The mean average also remains constant with 2012 and for the first time is equal between still missing and found alive cases.



**Table 3: Satisfaction scores by missing person’s status, 2010 to 2012**

	2010		2011		2012		2013	
	Still missing	Found alive	Still missing	Found alive	Still missing	Found alive	Still missing	Found alive
<b>Mean</b>	1.4	1.8	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.7	1.6	1.6
<b>Median</b>	1.6	2.0	1.6	1.8	1.7	1.9	1.8	1.8
<b>Mode</b>	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0

*"No hesitation in recommending Missing People!"*

Ninety-six per cent of respondents said that they would recommend Missing People to someone in a similar situation.

*"Whoever at the time was dealing with us constantly kept in touch."*

*"Bitter, disappointed and upset: I'm existing not living. Everyday it's still there. I snap and get annoyed about things - it affects my relationship with my husband."*

## Experiencing a relative being missing

*“Obviously over the past year there has been time out from work. I had five weeks off myself in one go. It’s a rollercoaster of emotions. It’s a massive reality check how you take life for granted”*

As shown in *Living in Limbo: The experiences of, and impacts on, the families of missing people* (Holmes, 2008), families experience a range of practical impacts when someone goes missing, as well as the emotional and social effects.

- One hundred and ninety-six respondents were asked about the impacts they had experienced (excluding cases where the missing person had been found to have died). Table 4 shows the impacts reported by respondents to the survey.
- This year’s survey highlights a noticeable increase in both physical (five per cent up on 2012) and mental health concerns (nine per cent increase on 2012) for family members. More than half of all respondents who were asked about impacts (54 per cent) reported having experienced mental and/or physical health concerns as a result of a family member being missing.
- Similar to satisfaction results, a balance point appears to be emerging in the key area of financial concerns.

*“The confidentiality of things - like accessing his bank account ‘we can’t tell you that’ you’re really closed off in that regard”*

**Table 4: Impacts experienced**

Impact experienced	Percentage of respondents			
	2010 (n=155*)	2011 (n=145*)	2012 (n=126)*	2013 (n=196*)
Problems notifying a bank or building society	17%	16%	16%	15%
Problems dealing with an insurance company	4%	8%	4%	4%
Problems dealing with social security or benefits	8%	17%	13%	12%
Problems dealing with a mortgage	17%**	6%	2%	5%
Problems dealing with rent	-	14%***	6%	7%
Other legal, financial or ownership issues	9%	-	12%	16%
Problems dealing with the media	3%	11%	5%	5%
Physical health concerns	-	39%	31%	36%
Mental health concerns	-	41%	45%	54%
<b>Any practical or legal impact</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Any health impact</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>54%</b>

\*Columns are not additive because respondents could report more than one impact.

\*\*In 2010 the question asked about ‘mortgage, rent or bills’.

\*\*\*In 2011 the question asked about ‘rent or bills’.

*“I was very heavily pregnant at the time, and the baby came 15 weeks early due to complications”*

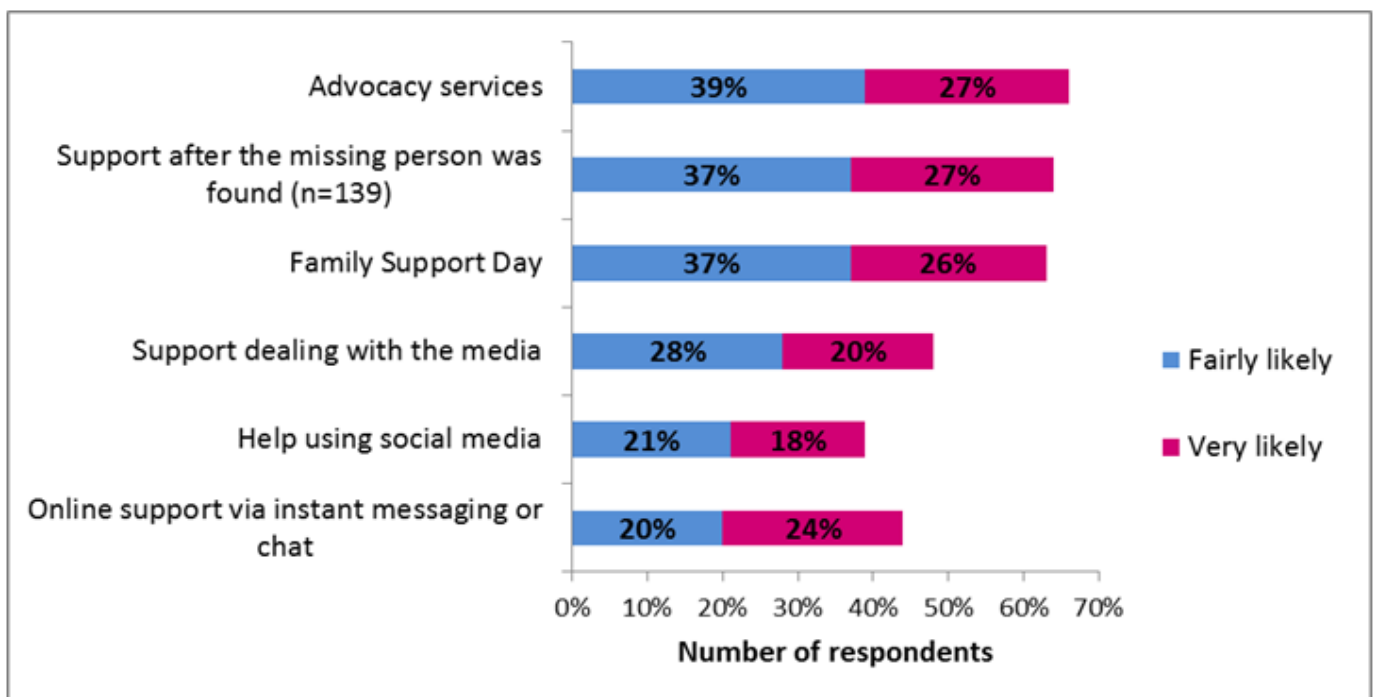
## New services

Family members responded positively to a variety of potential new services. The most common new services that were spontaneously suggested were counselling and advocacy services followed closely by online support/ forums, face to face support and family support groups.

*“I need someone to talk to about practical issues such as getting benefits”*

Figure 6 shows the percentage of family members who, when prompted, said they would be (or would have been) ‘very likely’ or ‘fairly likely’ to use listed new potential services.

**Figure 6: Likelihood of using new services**



*“I would really have liked a follow up, even though my son has been found. Advice on how to approach and communicate with my son, what questions should I ask”*

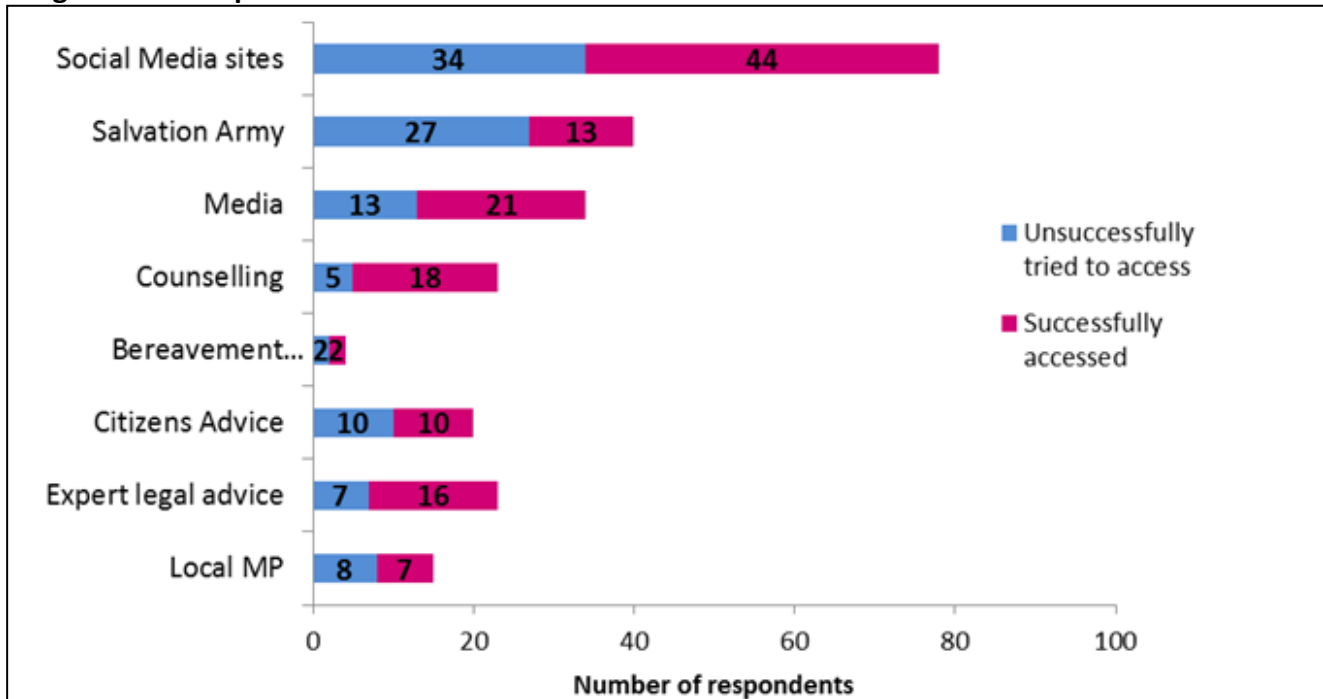
Seventy-one people, 62 per cent of those asked, offered to stay involved and help with the development of new services.

*“You were great - I want to help as much as I can.”*

## Accessing other services

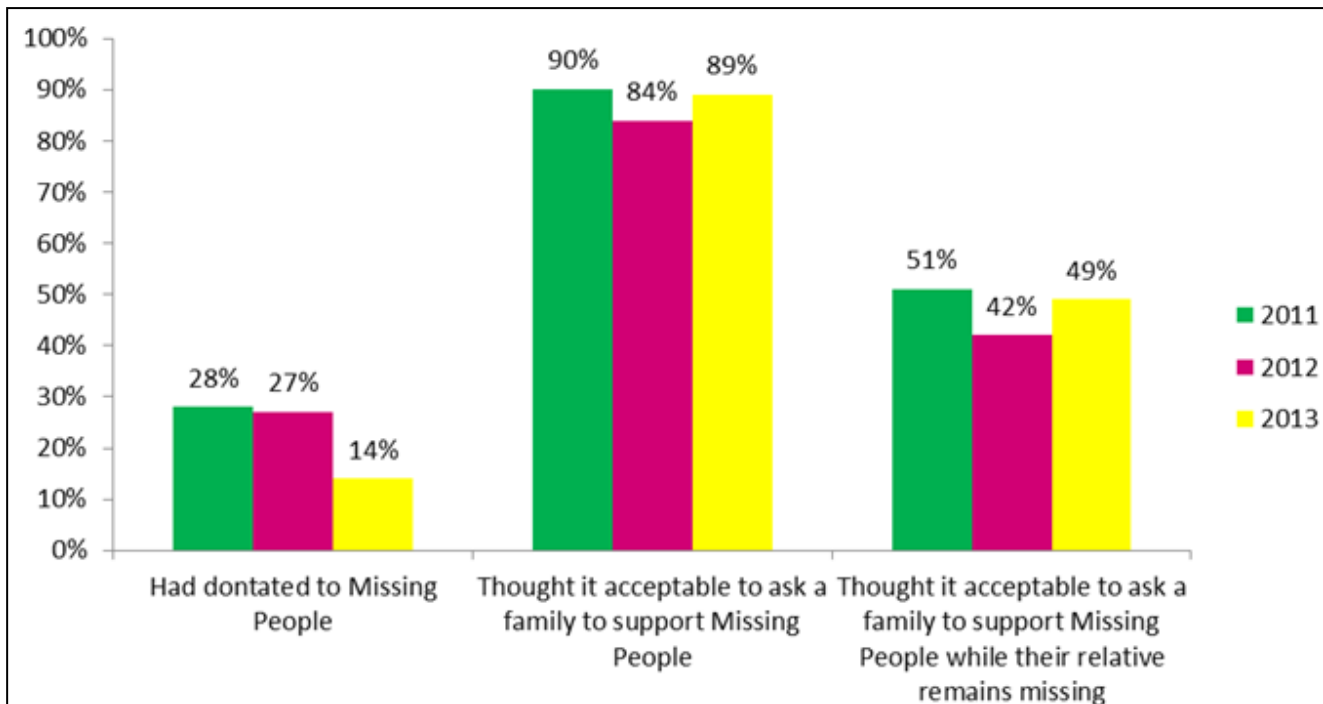
Some respondents had also accessed services other than Missing People and the police. In some instances, respondents had found that they were unable to access the services they needed.

Figure 7: Attempts to access services



**Fundraising**

*“I wasn't aware that you could donate”*



*“It's not that I'm not grateful for their support. [...] Missing People knows how we are suffering, it's not quite right to ask for a donation”*

Forty-two per cent of all respondents expressed interest in supporting the charity either by sharing their story or raising funds in some way. Forty eight per cent said yes to supporting the charity through donation; 39 per cent by taking part in a sponsored event and 30 per cent by leaving a gift in their will.

### 3. Summary and recommendations

*“I want to reiterate how enormously comforting I found your services! Very informative and supportive.”*

#### **Overall satisfaction**

- Overall satisfaction remains high and retains the mean score of 2012. On a scale of +2.0 to -2.0 (positive being satisfied and negative being dissatisfied) the mean average across all respondents was +1.6. The mode (most common) score was +2.0 and the median (middle score) was +1.8. (See Table 3, page 11).
- The mean satisfaction score of respondents whose family member was still missing (1.6) was higher than in 2012 (1.5) and for the first time was equivalent to the mean score of people whose family member had been found. More than half (58%) of respondents whose family member was still missing reported that, nonetheless, their expectations of Missing People had been ‘completely met’ or ‘exceeded’. (See Table 3, page 11).
- The charity’s ability to completely meet or exceed expectations is at an all-time high. (See Table 2, page 6).
- There was a fall in some areas of satisfaction, most notably post-closure contact. (See Figure 3, page 9).
- Ninety-six per cent of respondents would recommend Missing People to someone in a similar situation. (See page 11).
- The charity’s provision to service users remains strong and this year’s results form part of a building picture of consistency.

#### **Initial contact**

- Satisfaction with the ease of first getting in touch has dropped to a record low as has the response to initial enquiries. Whilst these lows are still healthy and above 80 per cent it indicates an area which needs exploration. (See Figure 3, page 9).
- The proportion of respondents who first heard about Missing People from the police (36%) is higher than in 2012 (33%) and nearly the same as the 2011 high of 37%. (See page 4).

#### **Impacts on families**

- More people than ever before reported that they had experienced mental health concerns as a result of having a missing family member. (See Table 4, page 12).
- Practical impacts experienced remain relatively on par with previous years at just under one-third of respondents reporting that they had experienced any practical impact. (See Table 4, page 12).

## **Financial and fundraising**

- The financial burden on respondents was substantial. Over one-quarter (29 per cent) experienced practical or financial problems as a result of a family member being missing. Twenty five per cent reported that, financially, they were finding life 'very' or 'fairly' difficult, compared to 20 per cent in 2012. Those 'doing alright' or 'living comfortably' dropped from thirty eight per cent in 2012 to thirty six per cent in 2013. This trend may have been affected by the ongoing recession in the UK, where the majority of respondents are based. (See page 3).
- The increasing financial burden may go some way to explaining the twelve per cent drop in those who had donated to the charity (14 per cent as opposed to 23 per cent in 2012). (See page 14).

## **New services**

***"I need someone to talk to about practical issues such as getting benefits."***

- 'Advocacy services' was the most requested new service. Eight people suggested it without any prompting (equalled only by suggestions for counselling) and, when prompted, two-thirds of respondents said they would have been 'very' or 'fairly likely' to use advocacy services. In the questionnaire, advocacy was explained as being 'representations made on your behalf to official agencies or companies'. (See page 13).

***"Co-ordination with authorities to inform them he was missing."***

- Post closure support is the second most requested new service. As evidenced by satisfaction scores the charity excels in its provision of support whilst a case is open however satisfaction with the post-closure element of service was markedly down. Tied in with the evident increase in mental health concerns there appears to be a pressing need to explore the reasons for this and evaluate existing and potential service provision. (See Figure 6, page 13).

***"Really good idea for support after the person is found. It doesn't just go away. You live in fear that it will happen again."***

- Suggestions from respondents will continue to be taken into account in the ongoing development work of the charity. The survey provides a snapshot of opinion from family members who have a relatively new experience of the charity. More in-depth work with family members would complement survey findings and bring value to service development.

## **References**

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=455> accessed 15<sup>th</sup> July 2011

Holmes, L. (2008) [\*Living in Limbo: The experiences of, and impacts on, the families of missing people\*](#) (London: Missing People)