Family Feedback Survey 2010

"Thank you so much for all your help - you were caring, warm and encouraging, and gave us hope"

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

Summary

- 155 families completed the survey between January and March 2010. The majority of people who completed the survey were women, and were aged between 35 and 64 years old.

- Overall satisfaction with Missing People's services was high. On a scale of +2.0 to -2.0 (positive being satisfied and negative being dissatisfied) the mean average across all cases was +1.7.

- The aspects of the service that scored most highly related to staff and volunteers' skills; their behaviour and their understanding of cases, as well as the ease of making first contact and the response to the initial enquiry.

- Correspondents felt the provision of written guidance detailing Missing People's services and advice on other aspects of the issue would be the most helpful new service the charity could provide.

1. About the survey

"When I needed you, you were fantastic. There was a plan for if she was missing for longer, so I felt very confident with you. You took us seriously straight away."

The survey's main aims are:

- To gather information directly, and confidentially, from families about their experiences
- 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

The number of family support cases opened in 2009 was relatively low compared to the previous year, mainly because of the restricted remit of the Services team with regard to family tracing cases. There were 228 eligible families in the sample, of whom 155 (68%) fully completed the questionnaire between 11 January and 28 March 2010. After taking part in the survey, 36 people requested a call back from the Services team to discuss their case.

2. Findings

"Thank you so, so much for the support - I wouldn't have got through it without you."
Who took part?

- 107 (69%) of the family members who took part were female, compared to 48 (31%) male.
- Just over two thirds (70%) were aged between 35 and 64 years old, while the rest were

evenly split between under 35s (14%) and over 65s (16%).

- The family members who took part were: mothers looking for sons (31, 20%); sisters looking for brothers (29, 19%); brothers looking for brothers (13, 8%); and mothers looking for daughters (12, 8%).

- 51 respondents had children aged under 18 years living in their home. The total number of children living with respondents was 100.

- 88% of respondents identified themselves as white; and English is the main language spoken at home in more than 95% of the households.

- Around a fifth (18%) owned their home outright and around a third either owned it with a mortgage (32%) or rented from a council or housing association (32%).

- 17% of respondents felt they were living comfortably, and 28% reported that they were 'doing alright'. The largest group (34%) said that they were 'just about getting by' and the remainder who answered the question (15%) said they were finding it very or fairly difficult.

Who are the missing people?

"I was so grateful for everything you did for us when my daughter went missing. It was a great comfort for us that you were doing so much to help."

- Nearly three quarters of the missing people were male (112, 72%) and just over a quarter were female (43, 28%).

- More than half of all respondents' missing family members were men aged between 25 and 54 (55%).

About the search

"You were amazing! I wouldn't have got through it without the support I got from you."

- 108 family members (70%) who took part in the survey reported that their missing family member had been found, and 47 (30%) that the person was still missing.

- 41 cases (26%) were open to Missing People for less than one week, and a total of 65 cases (42%) were open for less than one month.

- In almost a quarter of Found cases, the missing person had chosen not to make contact with their family, and instead had passed a message to their family via the charity.

- More than a third (36%) had been missing more than once.

- 67% had been reported missing to the police. 11 people had tried to make a police report but the police had not opened a case. 67% of police cases were reported missing to the police within 48 hours.

- 85 family members (55%) had tried to access services, other than Missing People and the police. The most commonly approached services were: The Salvation Army (35 had accessed, a further 12 had tried, but failed); a family doctor; the media; Citizens Advice (8 had accessed, a further 6 had tried, but failed); religious support; a private investigator; legal advice; and counselling services.

Accessing Missing People

"When you're in a situation like this you're completely overwhelmed, so we were very grateful for your help."

- 26% found out about the charity via the internet, 25% from the police, 13% through word of mouth and 12% on television

- 57% had used the Missing People website, most (but not all) of whom have internet access at home.

Satisfaction

"Everyone I spoke to on the phone, were as helpful as they could be."

Figure 1 below shows the percentage of family members who were 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with the range of the charity's services.
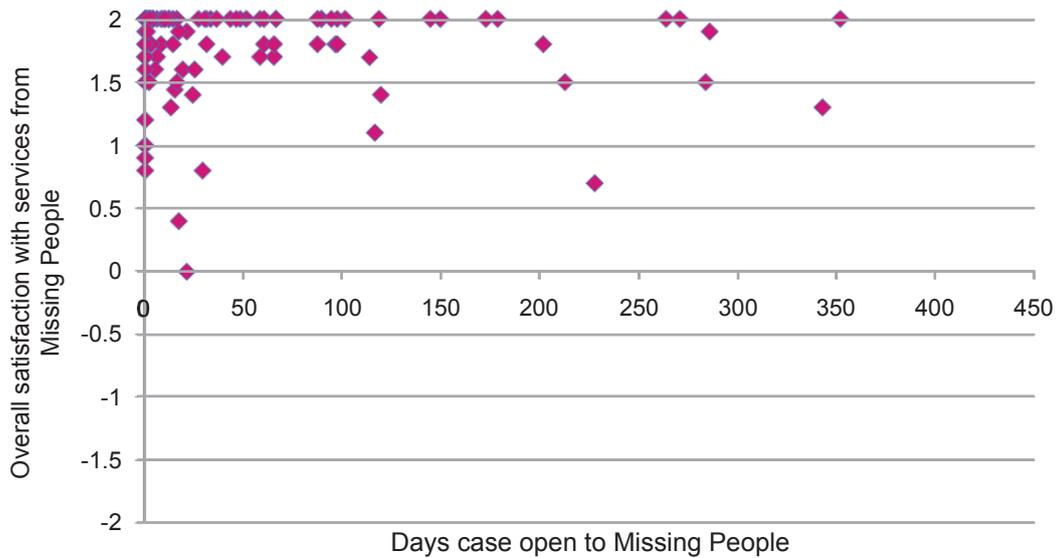
Figure 1: Very or Fairly satisfied

Percentage of total (n=155) 'VERY' or 'FAIRLY' satisfied

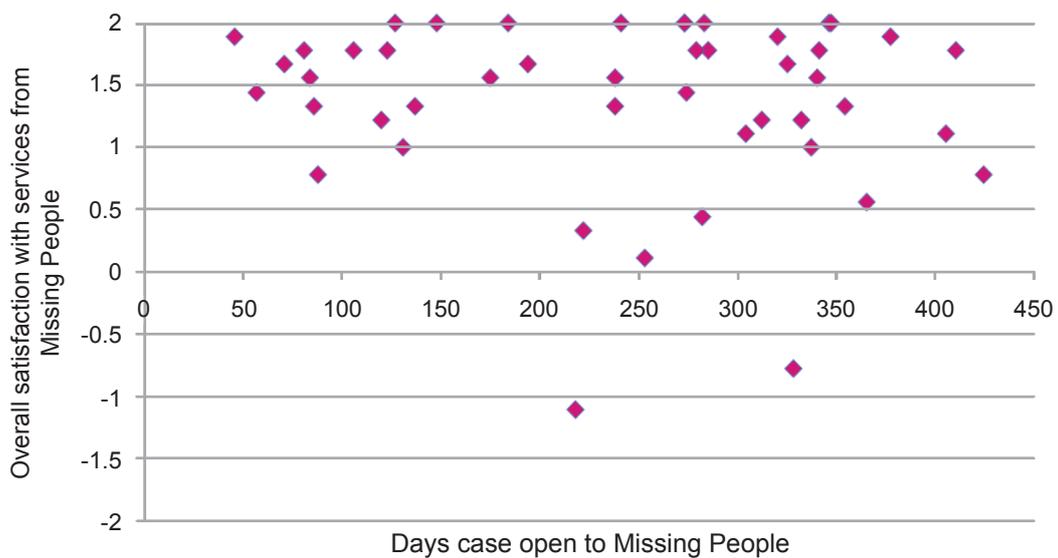**Very satisfied** ▮ **Fairly satisfied**
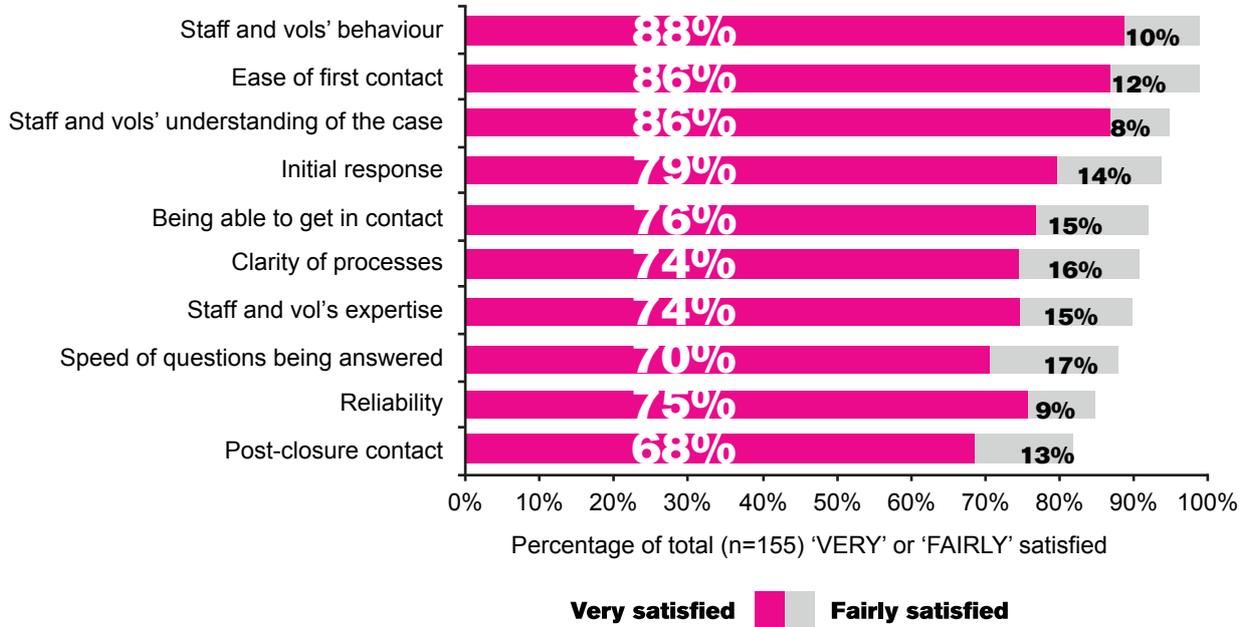
A satisfaction score was derived for each respondent. On a scale of +2.0 to -2.0 (positive being satisfied and negative being dissatisfied), the mean average across all cases was 1.7. The mode (most common) score was 2.0, and the median (middle score) was 1.8.

Figures 2 and 3 below show these satisfaction scores plotted against the length of time the family had been in touch with the charity. For Found cases the mean average score was +1.8 (mode +2, median +2), and for Still Missing cases the mean average was +1.4 (mode +2, median +1.6).

Figure 2: Found cases satisfaction rating

Y-axis: Overall satisfaction with services from Missing People
X-axis: Days case open to Missing People

Figure 2: Still missing satisfaction rating

Y-axis: Overall satisfaction with services from Missing People
X-axis: Days case open to Missing People

"It would be good for you to tell me exactly what enquiries you make, who you've contacted etc. It would be good to know what avenues you've explored."

- 86% felt that the charity had added to the police service.
- 56% of Found cases and 66% of Still Missing cases indicated that they would like to stay involved with the charity.

"Missing People is 100% dedicated to the cause, whereas the police have lots of other things that they have to do."

Experiencing missing

"Everybody should be aware about people going missing - before he went missing, I had no idea that this even happened to people. EVERYBODY should be aware of how traumatic it is when a person goes missing."

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. Table 1 below shows the practical impacts reported by respondents to the survey.

Table 1: Impacts experienced

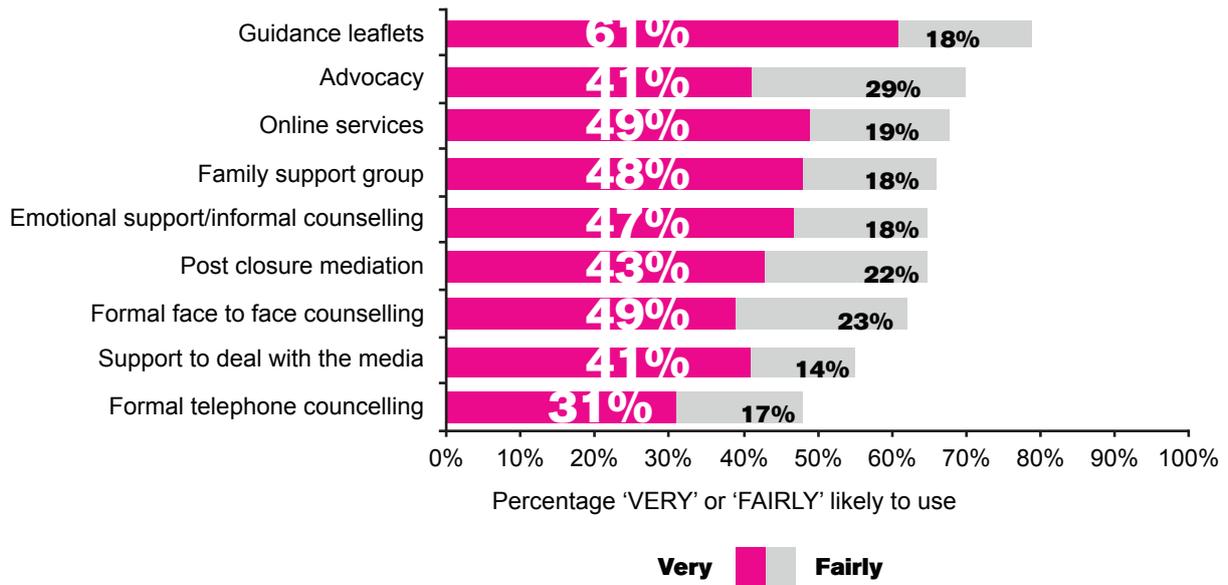|	Numbers*	% of all cases
Problems notifying a bank or building society	27	17
Problems dealing with a mortgage, rent or bills	26	17
Any other financial issues	14	9
Problems dealing with Social Security or benefits	13	8
Any ownership or legal issues	11	7
Problems dealing with an insurance company	6	4
Problems dealing with the media	4	3
Problems dealing with a pension	1	1

New services

- Family members responded positively to a variety of potential new services. Local family support groups were the most commonly-suggested spontaneously, and received support from two thirds of respondents when prompted. The new services that families thought they would be most likely to use were guidance leaflets, advocacy and online services.

- It seems that the families who still had a family member missing were more likely to report that they would use emotional support and counselling services; whereas those who had found their family member felt that they would have been more likely to use services to help them deal with practical (e.g. legal, financial) matters.

"One of the things that has been particularly difficult for us is information about my sister's mental health issue. […] If Missing People could provide information about mental health issues, it would have been really helpful."

"Intermediary with police maybe."

"Interesting to hear from someone who has been missing - what's going on in their head."

Figure 4 below shows the percentage of family members who, when read the list of potential new services, said that they would be (or would have been) 'very likely' or 'fairly likely' to use them.

	Very	Fairly
Guidance leaflets	61%	18%
Advocacy	41%	29%
Online services	49%	19%
Family support group	48%	18%
Emotional support/informal counselling	47%	18%
Post closure mediation	43%	22%
Formal face to face counselling	49%	23%
Support to deal with the media	41%	14%
Formal telephone councelling	31%	17%

Percentage 'VERY' or 'FAIRLY' likely to use

Very ▮ **Fairly** ▮

Fundraising

- 37% of family members who took part had donated to the charity.
- 94% thought it acceptable for the charity to ask service users for their support, and 53% of all respondents thought it acceptable to ask service users for support while their family member was missing.

"If there is anything I can do to help you, I would be more than happy to do so because I was just so thankful for your services - when I was really desperate, it was just great to know that someone was at the end of the phone to listen and help."

3. Summary and recommendations

- Overall satisfaction with the services provided by Missing People was high. On a scale of +2.0 to -2.0 (positive being satisfied and negative being dissatisfied), the mean average across all cases was 1.7. The mode (most common) score was 2.0, and the median (middle score) was 1.8.

"It felt like we were thrown a lifeline. Where would people go if we didn't have you?"

- Satisfaction seems to be slightly lower for families whose family member was still missing. While this survey cannot draw firm conclusions about the cause of this apparent pattern, it may be related to the fact that the expectation of finding the missing person has not been met; or to a perceived drop in service standards over time.

- It seems from this survey that the aspects of the service which scored most highly were those related to staff and volunteers' skills: their behaviour and their understanding of cases, as well as the ease of making first contact and the response to the initial enquiry.

"The important thing for me at the time was to find someone on the end of the phone who was calm, supportive and factual. Thank you."

- The areas that seem most ripe for improvement are related to resources, not skills: speed of answering questions; reliability; and aftercare when the person is found.

"The only thing that was a bit annoying was talking to different people, but that was fine really as I guess you can't really do anything about that."

- Improved written materials should be provided to explain the services and processes involved in the charity's work. This could take the form of a checklist or information outlining our services so as to avoid confusion.

"Possibly email people and explain the scope of your activity, and what processes you go through and what expectations should be about tracing somebody."

- In order to minimise the impacts on families, the most common problems that should be addressed (in terms of prevalence) are: problems dealing with banks and building societies; problems dealing with mortgages, rent and bills; and problems dealing with Social Security benefits.

- The findings from this survey suggest that service users would benefit from having advice on these areas available in leaflets and online; and 70% would have been likely to use advocacy services if available.

- There is some evidence to support the provision of extended emotional support services: 66% of respondents said they would have been likely to use a family support group; 65% informal counselling; 62% formal face to face counselling; and 48% formal telephone counselling. Further deliberative Service User Involvement activities should be undertaken to explore how best these services could and should be structured in order to meet this need.

- Given the high number of children living with respondents to this survey, the charity should explore the possibility of offering specific services to children who are affected by family members going missing. This may be done in conjunction with other organisations with expertise in supporting children through trauma.

- The charity should consider how to improve the experience of families after their case is resolved. While it may be deemed outwith the charity's current remit, as an area of

dissatisfaction it jeopardises the potential for former service users to become future supporters. This should be subject to ongoing consideration and further consultation with service users.

"Closure with Missing People could have been better I think - I think you could have perhaps got in touch with me."

- There remains a strong expectation that the missing person will be found and reunited with the family. This may be an area that could be better managed, both through the use of advice leaflets and online services at the outset, and through the introduction of post-closure support.

- All service users should be given the opportunity to provide feedback, both while their case is open and soon afterwards. This might be done in writing or online.

- Families were keen to give something back to the charity either by becoming involved in planning and development, or through fundraising. There is both enthusiasm and need for ongoing service user involvement. This supports the introduction of a Service User Involvement Strategy and indicates that this work should be adequately resourced.

- The ongoing Service User Involvement programme should consider how best to get input from families with long term cases (those that have not been included in this sweep of the survey because they were opened before January 1 2009).

- Service users were enthusiastic about Missing People campaigning about the issue, reflected in the number of ideas that were put forward. Coupled with the enthusiasm for staying involved, it seems that campaigns around the impacts on families; awareness of the issue, its causes and its prevention; and improved response and coordination from agencies will garner strong support from the charity's service users.

- The survey has demonstrated that families are keen for Missing People to campaign publicly on these impacts in order to increase support for the charity, to raise awareness, and to foster improved coordination between support agencies.

- The family members who took part were predominantly women aged over 35 years, looking for male relations. The sample members were not particularly diverse, which may indicate that the charity is not sufficiently marketed or accessible to certain groups in society. Indeed, given that a substantial proportion of service users found the charity via word of mouth and the media, there is potential to consider how to extend awareness of the charity's services.

- Respondents to this sweep of the survey were 88% white British, 95% English speakers. The charity should continue to consider how best to ensure that services are marketed and accessible to non-English speakers and those from other ethnic groups. (N.B. This survey only measured age, sex and ethnicity, meaning that other areas of diversity were not measured).

- There is scope to explore the gendered aspect of missing – the charity works primarily with women looking for men, and better understanding of this may improve and extend the service provided.

- There was a great deal of support (94%) for the charity asking service users for support, justified by the fact that the charity provides a worthwhile service that needs to be funded. A substantial proportion of respondents (53%) said that this may be done whilst a family member is missing, provided that it is clearly described as a donation not a charge. Further deliberative Service User Involvement activities should be undertaken should the charity pursue this course of action.

- A User Feedback survey should be conducted annually in order to track changes over time.

"Thank you so much. Can you just say a really great thank you to everybody who helped?"

Report author

Lucy Holmes, Research Manager