

# What can Missing People do?

## Introduction

Missing People is here to listen and help if someone you care about has gone missing. Missing People offers support, advice and practical help at this difficult time. We can also help if you've lost touch with a family member over time.

In addition to helping conduct the search for a missing person, Missing People seek to offer a comprehensive support package, providing families of missing people with somewhere to turn and equipping them both practically and emotionally to find resolution wherever possible.

To access this support, please contact us.

Call or text: [116 000](tel:116000)

Email: [116000@missingpeople.org.uk](mailto:116000@missingpeople.org.uk)

The guidance in this document outlines the variety of services Missing People offer in support of families.

## Contents

<a href="#">1. Appeals and Sightings</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">2. Other Services for Families</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">3. Lost Contact Tracing Service</a>	<a href="#">6</a>

# What Missing People can do: Appeals and Sightings

Missing People aims to offer advice, practical assistance and emotional support when someone is missing. Missing People can be contacted around the clock and in confidence on **116 000** or [116000@missingpeople.org.uk](mailto:116000@missingpeople.org.uk)

One of the ways we can offer support is by helping in the search for a missing person. There are a number of different types of appeal we can make, and not all appeals will be suitable in every situation. In order for us to make an appeal, the missing person must have been reported as missing to the police. Missing People will then contact the police to check whether our involvement is appropriate.

If you are considering launching an appeal, there are many different means of doing so:

## Poster Appeals

A poster incorporating both a photograph and details of the missing person can be produced by Missing People and distributed in relevant locations such as the area where the person was last seen, where they are known to visit or have contacts. It is important this is done in consultation with both families and the police to ensure publicity is appropriate, and targeted in an effective manner. Not only will this maximise the chances of them being seen, it may also prompt the missing person to contact us themselves. Missing People are continually expanding our dedicated network of people across the UK who are committed to joining the search in their workplace or neighbourhood. We also have agreements with companies like Virgin Trains who display posters on our behalf. At present we have 3,400 poster partners in the UK who are willing to display posters. Anyone can download and distribute a poster from our website, although they will need to provide an email address and will be given guidelines on responsible use.

## Web Appeals

Missing People can launch a dedicated appeal for a missing person on the [Help us Find](#) part of our website, which receives over 34,000 hits every month. We can also create a profile to feature on various social networking sites using pictures and information provided by you. We have over 11,000 followers on Twitter and a further 3,000 on Facebook and these can be used to maximise exposure and generate awareness as people read and share the information with others. Of course you may prefer to set up a Facebook or other social networking page yourself and we are always happy to provide advice if you need it. It is important to include the police or Missing People's contact details to allow people to send information or sightings.

## Media Appeals

Despite the popularity of social media sites, print media, television and radio are all powerful tools for reaching millions of people quickly. For example Missing People have a working partnership with a number of media outlets who publish a photograph and appeal for information about a different missing person each week. We have produced guidance advising on all aspects of [Working with the Media](#), including the advantages and disadvantages of doing so, in order to help you make an informed choice.

We are happy to offer advice to families and friends who may have additional questions or concerns and will keep you informed of any further opportunities for maintaining publicity such as interviews, articles, programmes or editorial features.

## Sightings

Whether in print, or social media, appeals may generate feedback from the public which is vitally important in the search for vulnerable missing people. Missing People can handle the flow of possible sightings and information 24 hours a day. All incoming information is passed on to the police for them to follow up.

We do not communicate directly with families about sightings. We know how important updates and possible sightings are to families but we also want information that is shared to be credible and helpful. The police make these judgements and are best placed to update you.

# What Missing People can do: Other Services for Families

## Helpline Support

Our staff and volunteers are here for families of missing people, whatever they are going through, whenever they need us, and as long as their loved one is missing. To access this support, please contact us:

Freephone helpline: **116 000**

Email: [116000@missingpeople.org.uk](mailto:116000@missingpeople.org.uk)

Text: **116 000**

Through our helpline we offer a wide variety of services, from emotional and practical advice, to help in working with the police, social services and the media. Our caring and highly trained staff and volunteers will discuss your options and try to get you the support you need. If you are worried about the safety of a missing person, we would encourage you to contact the police as a first point of call.

## Family Connect Forum

[The Family Connect Forum](#) is a place for families to meet other families and friends of missing people online, to share, to get support and to get to know each other. The forum is moderated for safe and supportive use by the Moderation Team at Missing People. The forum can only be viewed by those who are registered on the Family Connect Forum. It is not viewable by members of the public or any other members of Missing People other than our Moderators. It is a safe place where families can be honest and can get support from each other.

If you would like to become a member of the Family Connect Forum please email [families@missingpeople.org.uk](mailto:families@missingpeople.org.uk) or phone **116 000**.

## Family Events

Throughout the year we organise events where families and friends can come together and meet others. This includes our annual Miles for Missing People run, our annual Family Conference and carol services at a number of locations across the country.

## Runaway Helpline and Message Home

Missing People provides support to children and adults who are missing. A non-judgemental, highly skilled team work around the clock to meet the needs of everyone who needs us; missing people and their loved ones. Via phone, messaging and online we provide free confidential support, advice and opportunities to reconnect.

## Local Support

Missing People has two regional managers who are able to support you in accessing local publicity. With their teams of volunteers they can help organise Appeal Days to raise awareness for your loved one, coordinate local press and support you with any events you might arrange.

Regional Manager (South): Josie Allan

Email: [josie.allan@missingpeople.org.uk](mailto:josie.allan@missingpeople.org.uk)

Phone: 020 8392 4517

Regional Manager (North and Wales): Alison Taylor

Email: [alison.taylor@missingpeople.org.uk](mailto:alison.taylor@missingpeople.org.uk)

Phone: 07872 601681

## Advocacy

Missing People's ongoing [Missing Rights](#) campaign aims to provide more support for families and make it easier for them to deal with a missing person's affairs. The campaign's aims include: increasing the number of local missing persons co-ordinators; improving communication with the police; and establishing a network of trained counsellors. Other aims include making it easier to deal with the legal affairs of someone who has been missing for some time. To get involved with the campaign, visit the Missing People website [here](#).

## Fundraise in tribute to a missing loved one

You can create an online tribute page and set up an 'In Tribute Fund' in the name of your missing loved one, allowing all past and future donations to be allocated to it. This allows us to update you on how much money has been raised in tribute to your loved one. If you would like more information please visit the Missing People website here: [Missing People In Tribute](#).

# What Missing People can do: Lost Contact Tracing Service

## Introduction

If you have lost touch with a relative we may be able to help you find them using our Lost Contact Tracing Service. This service is free of charge and can be used if:

- You are a direct relative of the missing person (a parent, child/stepchild, grandparent, grandchild, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew or cousin).
- The police have not assessed the missing person as vulnerable or at-risk.
- You know the full name and date of birth of the missing person.
- Both you and the missing person are over 18 years old.
- The missing person has been in touch within the last 15 years but not within the last 3 months.
- The missing person was last known to be in the UK.
- The reason for wanting to trace a relative must be a genuine one and a desire to be back in positive contact. We will not trace people solely for financial, legal, probate, funeral or custodial reasons.

Additionally:

- We cannot look for current or ex-spouses or partners.
- We only look for people who have met each and know each other.

Our aim is to make contact with your missing relative and let them know you are looking for them and would like to be back in touch. If the missing person is found, we also offer support to them and their family, through what is often a difficult and emotional time.

To access this service please contact us:

Call Freephone: [116 000](tel:116000)

Email: [116000@missingpeople.org.uk](mailto:116000@missingpeople.org.uk)

## **The service we provide**

We try to find your missing relative's current address. We make all our enquiries from our central office, and this is done in strict accordance with data protection law and respecting individual rights to privacy. We can search various address databases such as [Peopletracer](#) and we can also request a search of current addresses from Government agencies.

If we obtain a missing person's address it will remain confidential and we will not be able to release it anyone unless the missing person agrees. The same rules on privacy apply for any external agencies working on our behalf.

If an address is found, a letter will be sent to your missing relative. We will explain that we are acting on your behalf and that you would like to be back in contact, and we will encourage your relative to contact us.

If your relative responds, we will support them to re-establish contact if that is what they want. Sometimes they ask us to pass on a message to let you know they are alright. If you would like us to, we can pass on a letter from you or another family member to explain why you want to get in touch, or we can pass messages between you and your relative to start to rebuild contact if both of you agree.

On the other hand, if your relative isn't ready, or doesn't want to make contact, we will respect their choice. We also will not pass news or information to either side if it is potentially distressing.

If your relative already has your contact details they may, of course, get in touch with you directly once they know you are looking for them. However, we will not release your or your family's contact details to your relative without your consent.

## **How long does it take to find someone?**

On average, tracing someone can take 3 months to a year. One enquiry is made at a time. It can also take time for someone to decide whether or not to make contact.

## **If a relative can't be traced**

We will make all the enquiries we can to try to trace your relative. In the meantime you may want to send us a letter, which we will keep sealed on file, to pass on to them if they make contact with us.

If an address has been found and we have sent them a letter, but have received no response, we will send a second letter, either to the same address or a new one if it is found. However if there is no response to the second letter we will end our enquiries.

We understand it can be difficult to accept that a missing relative can't be found, but we will always try to support you and your family in this situation.

## **If a relative doesn't want their family to know he/she has been found**

Occasionally a missing person is found but he or she tells us that they don't want to be in contact with their family, or even that they don't want anyone to know that they have been found. It is your relative's right not to have their whereabouts disclosed and we must respect their decision.

However, if we think the person could be vulnerable or at risk we will offer them support, seek help for them or encourage them to seek help themselves. We will also encourage them to contact us whenever they feel ready to do so – whether this takes weeks, months or even years.

## **Keeping family members informed and providing help & support**

We will regularly update you on the progress of our enquiries, and we will let you know if we make any contact with your relative if he or she agrees to this.

If we have to end our enquiries we will suggest alternative tracing options - further information about alternative tracing services can be found on our website: [Looking for someone I've lost touch with](#).

## **Make a donation**

Missing People's Lost Contact tracing service is provided free of charge. If you would like to support Missing People's work you can make a donation to the charity. There are a variety of ways you can do this, find out more by visiting us at:

<https://www.missingpeople.org.uk/get-involved/support-us.html>

or by phone on **0208 392 4521**

Alternatively you can send a cheque to:

Missing People  
Roebuck House  
284 Upper Richmond Road West  
London  
SW14 7JE

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For further information and guidance on the issues addressed in this guidance sheet, or for support relating to any aspect of someone going missing, call Missing People's free and confidential 24 hour helpline on **116 000** or email [116000@missingpeople.org.uk](mailto:116000@missingpeople.org.uk)

Whilst this information has been provided in good faith, it should not be taken as legal advice. For information tailored to your circumstances, please contact your police force, solicitor or an advisory organisation as appropriate to your query.