A lifeline when someone disappears

Registered charity in England and Wales (1020419) and in Scotland (SC047419)
One million people in the UK are affected each year by a disappearance. Going missing is an ever present risk for hundreds of thousands of people facing the most profound issues in our society. Their loved ones, local communities and colleagues face an equally tough journey. The police simply do not have the means to support and find them all.

That’s where we step in. Our 24/7 crisis team is primed to help people grappling with issues around mental health, sexual exploitation, trafficking, dementia and homelessness. When people go missing, they become vastly more vulnerable. You only need to talk to one missing adult, lost at crisis point, to recognise the critical need for support and care.

We have reached, helped and found more people than ever in the last three years thanks to strong strategic planning and service delivery. Our services save lives. However, our crisis team is now stretched to capacity. The charity needs to make a fundamental step change in our growth over the next five years or face the reality that highly vulnerable people will not be able to get the support they so desperately need. We urgently need to raise further sustainable funds to make this happen.

**OUR 5 YEAR VISION**

We are working towards our Vision that every missing person is found safe. We aim to double our impact by directly helping 20,000 people each year. We will continue to provide services of the highest quality and fight for the rights of people affected by missing.

As we created this Strategic Plan we knew that continuing to grow what we already do well is not enough. We need innovative ways to support the people who need us the most.

We know it’s not going to be plain sailing. We are operating at a time when public trust in charities is lower, central government funding is fading, and EU funds will not be available. For the sake of those that need us, we must be confident in our ambition. If we don’t help them, no one will. No other national charity in the UK supports children, adults and families affected by missing.

Our decision to further invest in our infrastructure and people has created a greater, more resilient charity. We have inspired more people like you to support us to make our work possible.

This Plan is our commitment to transparency, resilience, adaptability and engagement with those that use our services — the most important qualities for a nimble and effective charity. We’ll keep challenging, analysing, planning, listening, learning from mistakes and asking the right people the right questions. We’ll keep adapting to the future and we’ll help to shape it.

With your support, in five years’ time we will be able to share the success of the next step on the charity’s journey with you - and to celebrate your role in helping vulnerable people. What a special moment that will be.

Jo Youle, CEO; Kate Adams, Chair and Sir Trevor McDonald, Patron
In the next five years, we want to double the number of people we help to 20,000. This represents achievable, challenging growth based on where we have come over the course of our last strategic plan.


My family and I have lived through bleak times, punctuated by intense highs when there is new information, only to crash down once again when it comes to nothing.

It is unrelenting pain that we have lived with since Lee’s disappearance. We live in limbo.

My wife Christine and I have been supported by Missing People since it was founded.

Knowing that we have Missing People’s team to help with appeals, and provide emotional support and advice is incredible. When we have been at our lowest we know the team will be there to catch us.

In 2014, the charity invited me to join its newly formed Choir, which has given me the opportunity to express my suppressed emotions of longing for my missing son, through the cathartic process of singing, and to meet other families in a similar situation.
At the most difficult time of my life Missing People pulled me back from the brink. I called them at my lowest point.

I hated my life. I’d been sectioned after returning from being missing and was really struggling when I spoke to them on the phone. I was offered a safe space to speak openly about why I’d been away and my concerns that it might happen again. It lifted my spirits and felt good to know someone was on my side whenever I needed them. But when I came back, I wasn’t looking after myself and was in a cycle of self-harm. I was going missing over and over again.

The next time I called, I had left again and wanted to kill myself. I’d taken a lot of drugs to try. The woman on the helpline stayed on the phone while she called an ambulance for me. I’m so grateful that they did otherwise I wouldn’t be here getting the help I need today.

Nadia, 31 years old

I had been put into a care home and couldn’t understand why so I just left.

I found myself on the street in the dark. I knew I should go back but it was too far to walk and I had no way to get there.

It was pretty lonely and depressing, just sitting trying to keep warm.

I got a text from Missing People and texted back asking how I could get home. They offered to ask the police to pick me up which was good. I was starting to get pretty scared.

Jack, 15 years old
In this plan we outline our ambitions to help more people. We help them through face-to-face or, phone, text or email-based support. We help people by providing emotional support, exploring options and making sure they get the help they need to stay safe.

We use the term children to refer to anyone using any of our services under the age of 18. This includes children and young people receiving face-to-face support on returning from being missing, those accessing the 1-2-1 chat service through the Runaway Helpline website and those contacting us on the helpline by phone, text and email. In 2016/17 we helped 3,330 children and young people.

To double the number of people we help by 2022, we need to increase the number of people we reach by offering more support to more people through Textsafe text messages and return home interviews, our website and other digital outreach.

We work in partnership with every police force across Great Britain to find and safeguard missing people and support their families. In 2016/17 we spent nearly 8,000 hours supporting national police agencies.

We support thousands of people each year who have a missing loved one. These people are families and close loved ones of a missing or formerly missing person of any age.

We offer families impacted by missing the same quality and consistency of practical and emotional support regardless of the length of time that has passed. In 2016/17 we helped 4,224 families.

Adults refers to anyone over 18 years old using our services at any stage of their missing experience.

We are here for those who need us most if they are thinking about going missing, already away from home or on their return. In 2016/17 we helped 2,613 adults.
AIM 1:
BY 2022, WE WILL DOUBLE THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WE HELP EACH YEAR TO 20,000 ACROSS THE UK, FOCUSED ON THOSE WHO NEED OUR HELP THE MOST

10,000 CHILDREN ARE SAFER FROM HARM EVERY YEAR

WE WILL REACH AND OFFER SUPPORT TO EVERY CHILD REPORTED MISSING TO THE POLICE THROUGH OUR SERVICES

We will help 10,000 children each year through our central and local services giving emotional and practical support to children who are missing or thinking about going missing, by connecting missing children to safety and offering support when children return from missing.

Our resources will help children understand the risks of running away, how to get help before they go missing and recognise the links between missing, child sexual exploitation, gang exploitation and mental health

4,000 VULNERABLE ADULTS ARE SAFER FROM HARM EVERY YEAR

WE WILL DEVELOP AND EVALUATE RETURN HOME INTERVIEWS AND TEXTRETURN FOR ADULTS

We will reach and offer support to 4,000 vulnerable adults each year through our services, helping them to stay safe

We will directly help 4,000 adults each year through our central and local services, giving emotional and practical support, and connecting them to safety

6,000 PEOPLE WITH A MISSING LOVED ONE ARE BETTER ABLE TO COPE EVERY YEAR

WE WILL DELIVER NEW SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES FACING LEGAL AND FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

We will reach and offer support to 30,000 people with a missing loved one each year, reaching out through FamilyText, an enhanced website and police referrals

We will directly help 6,000 people with a missing loved one each year through our central and local services, supporting their search, providing specialist emotional and practical support

We will deliver peer support for families with missing loved ones

We will develop and deliver support services for children with a missing loved one

We will identify opportunities to deliver face-to-face support for families
AIM 2: EVERYONE USING OUR SERVICES CONTINUES TO RECEIVE HIGH QUALITY SUPPORT BASED ON THEIR NEEDS

CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS ACTIVELY INFLUENCE AND IMPROVE OUR SERVICES

- We will develop and deliver an engagement plan to ensure children and adults at risk of missing guide the development and review of our services
- We will develop and implement new feedback and impact measurement tools across our local and national services and set baselines and benchmark levels of satisfaction
- We will review and ensure our services meet the needs of diverse communities

WE WILL REVIEW HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH CHILDREN AND ADULTS TO ENSURE WE REMAIN RELEVANT IN A DIGITAL WORLD

PEOPLE WITH A MISSING LOVED ONE ACTIVELY INFLUENCE AND IMPROVE OUR SERVICES

- We will conduct a feasibility study on peer support service options
- We will review and ensure our services meet the needs of diverse communities
- We will review and improve how we communicate with families to ensure we remain relevant in a digital world

COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE UK ARE BETTER EQUIPPED TO RESPOND WHEN SOMEONE GOES MISSING

- We will review and improve how best to appeal for missing people, considering ‘digital footprints’, their ‘right to be forgotten’ and the effectiveness of our publicity appeals
- We will share our expertise with employers and statutory agencies on how best to respond when someone goes missing.
- We will continue to learn from and share our own good practice about the most effective tools for finding missing people

WE WILL ENGAGE WITH A RANGE OF PARTNERS WHO CAN STRENGTHEN OUR SEARCH NETWORK TO FIND PEOPLE MORE QUICKLY
AIM 3:
WE WILL SPEAK UP FOR MISSING PEOPLE AND THEIR LOVED ONES

EVERY MISSING CHILD HAS A SAFE PLACE TO TURN TO FOR HELP

We will remain at the cutting edge of understanding the links between children going missing and sexual and gang exploitation, domestic violence, trafficking, mental health and children in care. We will share this expertise with governments and statutory services.

We will develop our partnerships with statutory and voluntary agencies and raise awareness of best practice responses when children go missing.

We will continue to develop and deliver individual advocacy for children we support.

WE WILL CAMPAIGN FOR EVERY MISSING CHILD TO HAVE A SAFE PLACE TO TURN FOR HELP

ADULTS WHO GO MISSING ARE CONSIDERED AS VULNERABLE

We will campaign for better support for returned adults and for clarity around the responsibilities of statutory agencies.

We will remain at the cutting edge of understanding the links between adults going missing and other issues including dementia and mental health. We will share this expertise with governments and statutory services.

We will develop our partnerships with statutory and voluntary agencies and raise awareness of best practice responses when vulnerable adults go missing.

WE WILL TRAIN ALL POLICE FORCES TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE WITH A MISSING LOVED ONE

We will work with statutory and voluntary agencies to ensure that families with a missing loved one are getting the support they need.

We will continue to develop individual advocacy for families we support.

The support needs for people with a missing loved one are recognised and responded to by UK governments and police.

WE WILL CONTINUE TO DEVELOP AND DELIVER INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY FOR ADULTS WE SUPPORT

WE WILL TRAIN ALL POLICE FORCES TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE WITH A MISSING LOVED ONE

WE WILL GET LEGAL GUARDIANSHIP POWERS IN PLACE ACROSS THE FOUR NATIONS TO ENABLE FAMILIES TO MANAGE THE AFFAIRS OF A MISSING LOVED ONE
How we will achieve our plan

With an enhanced infrastructure and the benefit of economies of scale, we will **double our annual income from £3m to over £6m by 2022**

**SUSTAINABLE AND CONTROLLED GROWTH**
- We will maintain reserves of 3-6 months expenditure
- We will develop new ways of working and delivering services digitally
- We will involve people who have been missing or who have had a loved one go missing in our fundraising

**THE CHARITY IS A GREAT PLACE TO WORK AND VOLUNTEER**
- We will maintain regular and open communications with staff and volunteers
- We will promote a new approach to personal development
- We will develop and deliver a well-being and resilience plan
- We will work towards our staff and volunteers reflecting the diversity of the communities we support

**VALUES-BASED LEADERSHIP AND STRONG GOVERNANCE**
- Our recruitment approach will be rooted in our values
- We will undertake annual reviews of safeguarding, equality and diversity, fundraising practice, and governance
- We will continue to have trustees who have been missing or who have had a loved one go missing on the board

We will ensure we have the resources and infrastructure we need to achieve growth, maintain quality and remain relevant through HR, IT, Facilities and Volunteering Plans

We will continue to develop best practice in relation to data protection

We will measure quality and performance against our ethos

We will work in partnership with other experts, and our European and International colleagues, to achieve our aims, stay in line with best practice and put resources to their best use
Raising the funds

To deliver our plan, we need the help of existing and new supporters to increase annual income to £6 million per annum by 2022. If we don’t succeed, vulnerable missing adults and children will be at risk of harm and exploitation. Their families, friends and communities will continue to face agonising waits not knowing where they are.

We see challenges as opportunities and are ambitious and positive in the face of limited central government funding and the anticipated end of EU funding. Our approach to raising funds is changing to meet these demands – and it is more important than ever for us to engage and inspire the public, philanthropists and companies to help us be a lifeline. If we aren’t there to care for and support missing people and their loved ones, no one will be.

**Statutory Funding**

We will:
1. Work with UK government to fund our 24/7 crisis services that save the public purse millions of pounds
2. Expand the number of local projects we provide in partnership with Local Authorities

**Voluntary Funding**

We will:
1. Inspire the public with our movement to Find Every Child – asking for their personal help to raise funds, give and to make a gift in their Will
2. Compel more philanthropists to join our mission and to help financially and through their networks
3. Win multi-year funding from trusts and foundations who understand that the issue cuts across mental health, sexual and gang exploitation, homelessness, and more, to enable us to create early interventions and outcomes that change lives
4. Create compelling partnerships with pioneering companies to put the issue at the heart of their social purpose

**Commercial Funding**

We will:
1. Scope commercial funding opportunities that have potential to be a legacy of sustainable funding beyond the life of this plan

**Transformational Investment**

A donation of £50,000 will allow us to transform the life of a vulnerable missing child and their family, while saving the public purse significantly more.

- **£50,000 donation**
  - Helps to find 65 vulnerable children*
  - 325 family members no longer in a desperate situation**
  - £156,975 potential saving to the public purse***

*Estimated ave. cost for the charity to help find a child: £750
**Based on five ‘intimate friends or relations’ per child, supported by Dunbar’s number, a widely accepted calculation of social network size.
***Based on £2,415 as a realistic estimate of the cost of police investigating a medium-term missing child (University of Portsmouth’s Centre for the Study of Missing Persons)
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