

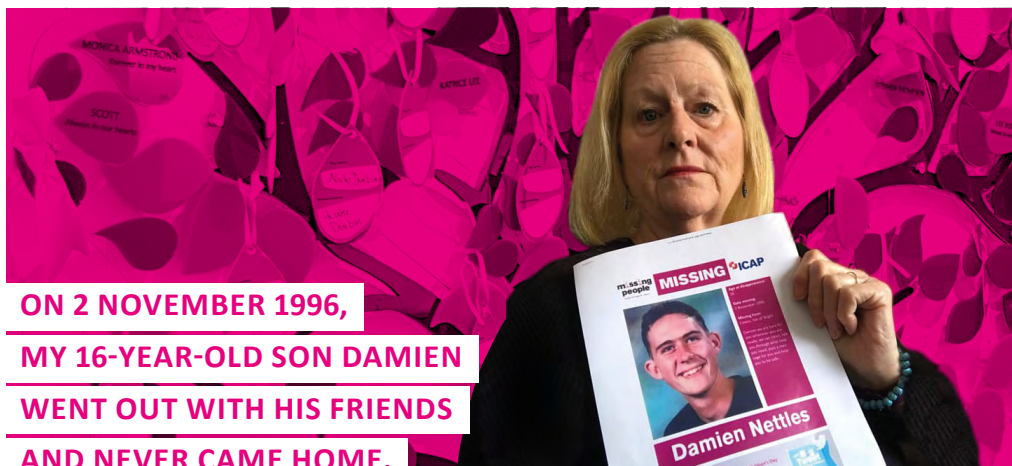
116 000
free • 24/7 • confidential

Autumn 2019



GET TOGETHER

Your newsletter from Missing People



**ON 2 NOVEMBER 1996,
MY 16-YEAR-OLD SON DAMIEN
WENT OUT WITH HIS FRIENDS
AND NEVER CAME HOME.**

I can't even express how valuable it is to have someone there through the devastation. Missing People truly were a lifeline, a calming voice that helped guide me through the enormity of the search. 23 years later they're still there, offering support whenever I need it. I live in America now, but I still phone and email my case worker, which allows me to get all my thoughts out. Knowing Missing People is there no matter the time difference is a comfort blanket.

Anyone affected by a disappearance is invited to commemorate their loved one with a leaf on the Family Tree. It might seem like a small thing, having a leaf. But it gives me so much reassurance – just knowing there's a permanent marker to my son and that I can go to the Missing People office and see it whenever I'm back in the UK. Damien

is still missing, we don't have a resting place or a space to remember him. So this small leaf makes a huge difference.

As well as sponsoring a leaf on the Family Tree, I continue to support Missing People in any way that I can. I want more people to understand the issue of missing, so I'm going to keep raising awareness and helping families going through this ordeal.

Inside this issue, you will read the importance of families getting together and the impact of sharing each other's experiences to support one another. You will also hear from Josie, Senior Policy and Campaigns Manager and find out how Missing People is helping change legislation for families who are affected by a disappearance, like mine.

Valerie Nettles

MISSING PEOPLE MATCHING TOOL

Missing People has partnered with the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, to develop the 'Missing People Matching Tool'.

Launched in April, this exciting initiative is helping outreach workers in the capital identify whether people who are homeless have been reported as missing. One of the project's aims is to combat the rise of homelessness in London. New data reveals 8,855 people slept rough in the capital last year, facing serious dangers every day.

Many of them will be on our missing persons' database, with their families facing an agonising wait for news.



SPOTLIGHT ON

JOSIE: SENIOR POLICY AND CAMPAIGNS MANAGER

What is your background?

I studied philosophy at university and then was lucky enough to start volunteering at Missing People when I moved to London. My first role was in the fundraising department and then I went on to doing some volunteer management. While doing that, I saw an opportunity for the Policy and Campaigns Manager role which is what I had always been passionate about so I went for it!

What does your role entail?

My role is to work with relevant agencies, from government departments to the police, to Ofsted to individual local authorities, to ensure that they give the best possible response to missing people. We always try to be led by what the people we support need so I spend a lot of time talking to people with lived experience and then try to work out the best way to make change. That can really vary. In the last couple of years we've campaigned for new legislation, for better multi-agency working, for changes in inspections of the police and children's services. It's exciting to work on such a wide variety of projects.



What has been your highlight of working for Missing People so far?

Over the last few years I have had the opportunity to work with a group of mums whose children have been criminally exploited. It can be hard for them to openly campaign because it's vital their anonymity is protected. It's been

amazing to help in a small way to ensure their voices are still heard and that the issue of criminal exploitation has become a high priority concern across the country. I've also been really lucky to be responsible for the last two years of the guardianship campaign which has meant a new law has been created for families to be able to look after a missing loved one's affairs.

How can people get involved?

You can sign up to become a campaigner by visiting missingpeople.org.uk. It's also important to talk about the issues of missing to your friends and family to overcome the misunderstanding about the issue. Not all missing people or their families get the support and compassion they deserve.

How will it work?

The tool cross-references information from the Mayor's CHAIN (Combined Homelessness and Information Network) records of rough sleepers in the capital with our database of thousands of missing people.

This enables outreach workers to approach the individual and tell them that they've been reported missing and discuss the different options available to them. The missing person would be in complete control, they can explore their options with Missing People and decide how they want to proceed. They may want to send a message home to let their family know they are safe,

or use our services for practical or emotional support. We can facilitate a reunion or simply acknowledge their safety and remove their name from the missing persons' database.

8,855
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last year.

Relationship breakdown, mental health difficulties and domestic abuse are just some of the reasons that people go missing and can end up sleeping on the streets. Homeless people are extremely isolated, so knowing someone has reported them missing and is searching for them could help them immeasurably. We are there to offer support, which could start the process of reconnection with those who care about them.

MISSING PEOPLE HIGHLIGHTS

AS Roma

Football legends AS Roma got in touch with Missing People in early July to offer using their transfer season to raise awareness of missing children and young people. Between July – August they have helped us reach out to over 4 million people by sharing four missing children's appeal posters every time there has been a player transfer. This support has been incredible; the power of sharing appeal posters will help us find more missing people safe and well.



Walk For Finn

Bek Stratfield and her friends have raised over £6,500 by completing her second Walk For Finn. Her son Finn has been missing since July 2017. They walked through the heat, the mist, the blisters and conquered 65kms in two days from Looe to Boscastle. The money they raised will help us keep our free 116 000 helpline open 24/7, to provide a lifeline for people missing a loved one and those away from home.



Find out how you can organise a walk for a missing loved one by visiting:
missingpeople.org.uk/walkfor

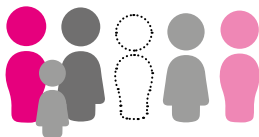
One of the highlights of the year is always our Family Day. This annual event gives families with missing loved ones the chance to chat to each other and Missing People Staff.

Family members came along to experience our 2019 theme "Self-care: looking after ourselves". Families took part in activities such as creative writing, consultation on how they access our services and a collaborative session to shape an online family forum.

One family member said *"...it was so lovely to speak to other families and the staff were amazing. For the first time in 20 years since [my loved one] went missing I felt sort of normal, it meant so much to me."*

Many individuals with missing loved ones do not prioritise their own wellbeing, so our most popular sessions were activities directly related to physical and mental self-care, in particular: looking after

FAMILY DAY



ourselves; acupuncture and memory quilting.

The most important part of the day for many of the families was having the chance to talk to other people who have experience of someone they care about being missing. It was an informal and intimate

gathering, which created a supportive environment where everyone felt their views could be heard and respected. However, hearing other people's stories was emotionally difficult and many found it tough to be attending another Family Day with no new information on their missing loved one. So there were many members of Missing People staff on hand to offer support. Most of the feedback showed the day was a success as most family members enjoyed being able to discuss their loved one and their ongoing experience of missing with others who truly understand what they're going through.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

- **Royal Parks Half Marathon Cheer Squad.**
Sunday 13 October, London
- **G4 Christmas Concerts** Volunteers needed across the country to collect donations at G4's UK tour over November and December.

Find out more:

missingpeople.org.uk/volunteer

- **London Christmas Carols,**
Monday 9 December,
St. Martin-in-the-Fields
- **Edinburgh Carols,**
Wednesday 11 December.
St Andrew's and St George's
West Church

Be a Lifeline for a Lifetime

A legacy donation is one of the most long-lasting ways you can help.

"Missing People has been the greatest source of support since my son went missing. When I made my Will, I was certain that Missing People should and would be one of my beneficiaries. My gift will help Missing People to continue to support someone facing some of the most difficult times of their lives."

Sarah Godwin

For your free guide to include Missing People in your Will please contact the legacy team at legacy@missingpeople.org.uk



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