

116 000

free • confidential • 24/7

Summer 2020



missing people

Registered charity in England and Wales (1020419)
and in Scotland (SC047419)



GET TOGETHER

Your newsletter from Missing People

FOR 27 YEARS,
MISSING PEOPLE
HAS BEEN A
LIFELINE FOR
PEOPLE WHO
HAVE NO ONE
TO TURN TO AND
NOWHERE ELSE
TO GO.



Starting in a small community as a response to the disappearance of a local woman, we have grown to be a national charity and have supported thousands of people through the worst moments in their lives across the UK. But we're now facing our greatest challenge: like you all, we have been trying to respond to the global pandemic. We've worked around the clock to ensure our services are open 24/7 as people need our support and we have continued to provide a vital service.

Monday 25 May was International Missing Children's Day. It was a moment to reflect and think about the thousands of families who are facing an agonising wait for news. Every year, 86,000 children are reported missing in the UK. Many of us spent Mother's Day and Easter away from our loved ones. It's incredibly

difficult to be separated from those we care about, but thankfully many of us have technology to bridge the gap and we're aware that this situation is only temporary. But that's not the case for people with a missing loved one. They don't know how long their pain will last. Already anxious and struggling, this has been amplified by the lockdown.

Inside this issue, you will read about how we have been affected by Covid-19 and the steps we've taken to protect our team while maintaining our support for missing people and their loved ones. You will hear from Kirsty, who works on our 'Lost Contact' service and find out how Missing People is helping families reconnect. And you will hear about Bek and how she walked for 24 hours to raise awareness of her son Finn, who went missing in 2017.

Thank you for supporting missing people and their families. At times like these, kindness and support are even more valued than ever.

Jo Yule
CEO of Missing People

How we're coping with Covid-19



At times, the world has become unrecognisable to us all. But in this moment of social distancing and isolation, it's been uplifting to see communities come together.

Our helpline team normally answer calls from our head office in South West London, but as the coronavirus outbreak escalated in the UK, we knew we would have to adapt to keep our team safe. Urgently working around the clock, we were able to set up a new phone system which works via the internet rather than phone lines and has allowed us to keep our helpline open. We set up our text, email and live chat services to be delivered remotely by our expert crisis team working from home. This means that we can continue to support those who need help 24/7. **The lights may have been turned off in our offices, but they are shining all through the night in the homes of our frontline staff as they continue to provide support during these times of uncertainty.**

The need for our services has never been higher. Our Runaway Helpline has seen a 35% increase from vulnerable children and young people seeking support. Relationships at home are strained, and those we support have reported

feeling 'trapped' and 'stuck' where they live. Taylor, a young runaway, returned to an abusive home following government advice. When she got back, family members threatened to kick her out and Taylor had no credit to call her social worker or anyone who could help. After reaching our helpline, we were able to support Taylor and connect her on a three-way call to social services so she could find a place of safety.

We've also had calls from people who are so scared of passing Covid-19 to their family that they would rather sleep on the streets.

During the lockdown we have continued to provide our services and given uninterrupted support to the police and families to assist with public appeals.

With your support, we will be able to adapt to changing needs throughout any situation; and ensure that we are here to listen and support people through the challenges they are facing – no matter what.



SPOTLIGHT ON

KIRSTY: LOST CONTACT SUPERVISOR

What does your role entail?

I work in the Services team as the Lost Contact Supervisor at Missing People. My role is to assess the hundreds of applications that we receive each year from people that have lost contact with a family member and are desperate to be reunited. There are many reasons why they could have lost touch: from family disagreements to someone simply moving away. I work with our fantastic trace partners to find people missing to their families and offer the support and space for a family to reunite in a safe and positive way.

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

The highlight of working in this job has been those



magic moments of reconnection. When you pass a telephone number to a son looking for his mum; a letter to a father seeking a daughter he hasn't seen since she was a child; when two brothers tell me they met for the first time in 10 years thanks to this service. We're seeing an increase in people wishing to find family members and build bridges as we live through this uncertain time. It seems to me that now, more than ever, we can really see what matters in life and take steps for a brighter future.

I've lost touch with a loved one, how can I apply?

If you're missing a family member from your life check out the criteria and fill in the Lost Contact application here www.missingpeople.org.uk/lostcontact.

MISSING PEOPLE HIGHLIGHTS



SEARCH DOG HEROES

The very first dogs and handlers have qualified to become Search Dog Heroes. Michelle and Peggy from Jersey, and Jo and Roo from Berkshire are the very first pairs to complete their training and be ready for deployment to help search for vulnerable missing people. Search Dog Heroes, the life-saving initiative developed by Missing People and Lowland Rescue, is helping to keep people at greater risk of going missing safe, such as those living with dementia or learning disabilities. Information and resources are available for families and carers worried about loved ones at www.searchdogheroes.org.uk.

DELIVEROO

Deliveroo worked with 500 riders across five cities nationwide during the lead up to Mother's Day in partnership with Missing People. Beginning in Manchester then moving on to Birmingham, Brighton, Cardiff and London – riders were given materials to feature the faces of missing people on their backpacks.

When someone goes missing every second counts and the more people who see pictures of the missing person, the greater the chance that they are found. Deliveroo raised awareness of vulnerable missing people, encouraged communities to join the search and donated an incredible £40,000!



FUNDRAISERS FIGHTING

FOR OUR

HELPLINE

From taking part in our first virtual Friends of Missing People Quiz, to getting creative with the 2.6 Challenge and joining our #24hours4missing run, where people around the country each ran for half-hour in an epic all-day relay. Our fundraisers have gone the extra mile to support our helpline during this difficult time. Spencer, aged 6, along with 12 of his friends virtually climbed Everest by going up and down their stairs 350 times each. They've raised over £3,000 – thanks for being heroes!



If you want to get involved, please email supporters@missingpeople.org.uk

Remi, our Family Support Manager, reflects on the pandemic and shares how we continue to extend support to those with a missing loved one in these exceptional times.



support and finding out what their experiences are and what support they need at this time. I'm pleased that in response to the pandemic, we started a weekly online social group,

It's been a big shift for the whole charity as we moved to remote working at lightning speed. I had so many questions about the additional impact Covid-19 would have for the people we support: will this increase the risk to people being exploited? Is there an extra burden of fear for the families that have someone away from home? How many people are now forced to stay at home in an unsafe situation?

What grounded me was focusing on what was within my control, contacting the people we

FAMILY SUPPORT

a safe space to come together and have a chat. The first one was a roaring success, there

were some beautiful moments where we were all laughing together.

A family member reflected that **“having a loved one missing, is living with uncertainty every minute of every day, and now the whole world is living with this same sense of uncertainty.”**

This was a unique opportunity to better understand ambiguous loss - which people affected by a disappearance live with daily.

HI, I'M BEK, MY BEAUTIFUL SON FINN HAS BEEN MISSING SINCE JULY 2017.



On the 20-21 June I completed a Walk for Finn: an epic 24-hour coast path relay near my home in Cornwall. Missing People have been by my side throughout this difficult journey. Me and my family have had access to so many services that the charity provide when a loved one is missing; they have shown nothing but compassion for our situation. So far, my challenge has raised almost £3k for the charity. It was lovely to walk into the longest day of the year as this was a very special day for Finn, he is never far from our hearts and is so loved and missed by us.



Missing People hopes to arrange 'A Walk For all missing people' this Autumn, which is open to all families to join. Alternatively, if you would like to arrange your own Walk For... we would be happy to support you. To register your interest please contact us at supporters@missingpeople.org.uk.



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