



# missing people

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



Autumn 2021

# GET TOGETHER

Your newsletter from Missing People

## WE HEAR FROM CHILDREN REPORTED MISSING FROM CARE

**Last year, over 12,000 children looked after in care went missing.**

They are some of those at the highest risk of going missing: shockingly 1 in 10 looked after children are reported missing, compared to 1 in 200 nationally.

In light of this, we have been working towards improving the response from the police and social services for children and young people who go missing from care. We believe it is vital to get the response right.

Thanks to funding from the Timpson Foundation, we carried out consultations with children and young people in care to understand what they want to happen when they are reported missing, including what response from the professionals around them can help.

**One young person told us:**

“Talk to me, get to know me, don't judge me, understand why I might go missing and help me manage those feelings and situations before it gets out of hand. Young people go missing for a reason, try to understand that. When we go, don't be angry or make us feel bad.”

The consultation was incredibly valuable, and this year we published a report: [Children's views on being reported missing from care: "Don't make me feel guilty or punish me, going missing might be how I cope when I can't ask for help"](#).

We have used these findings and our expertise to inform the development of a national good practice document, and continue to advocate for a better response when children go missing from care. In addition, we have run two online training sessions, reaching almost 200 professionals, including those from the police, care homes, social care, health services and a range of other agencies.



# DISCRIMINATION IN THE RESPONSE WHEN SOMEONE IS REPORTED MISSING.



Families from Black and other minoritised ethnic communities have told us about their experiences of discrimination in the response from agencies when they have reported a loved one missing, and in the media coverage of their loved one's disappearance.

**For families already facing the toughest trauma, these responses can make them feel powerless. It can increase the anxiety that their missing loved one is not being made a high enough priority and increase the frustration that the media are not doing more to publicise their loved one.**

We are committed to understanding more so that we can better support and advocate for families and help make change happen, led by families with lived experience.

After reviewing historical case files and from some initial conversations, we have seen examples of families identifying discrimination they have experienced at every stage of a missing incident, from police not accepting initial missing

**We are calling for more people to come forward and share experiences of discrimination faced during a missing person report.**

reports, to family members receiving dismissive responses during the investigation.

We are gathering more information from people who have reported a loved one missing, or have been reported missing themselves, to understand this issue in more depth.

[A survey is now live and can be found on our website](#), where people with lived experience can share details with

us anonymously if they wish. We are also looking for views from professionals working with missing people, and this survey can also be found on our website. If you would like to share your experience separately, or want to know more about this work please e-mail [research@missingpeople.org.uk](mailto:research@missingpeople.org.uk).

We are also feeding families' experiences into the Independent Office for Police Complaints thematic focus on race discrimination investigations.

**A linked, but separate issue, is that people from Black communities continue to be over-represented in missing person numbers, making up 14% of missing person reports while only 3% of the general population.**

## Highlights

### Family Day

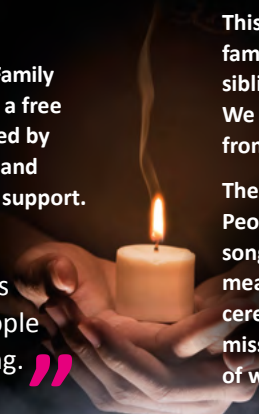
On 10 July, we hosted our annual Family Day online for the second time. It's a free event for family and friends affected by missing, where we come together and enjoy activities whilst getting vital support.

“It's good to talk and much easier to vent to others in similar situations than people without experience of missing.”

– Family member

This year, sessions included: yoga; advice for families during a police investigation; a special siblings' session; creative writing and more. We were delighted to have families join us from all over the world!

The day ended with the newly reformed Missing People's Choir sharing a few of their favourite songs to sing, and what being a part of the choir means to them. An emotional candle lighting ceremony followed this in memory of those missing - a powerful and poignant reminder of why the work we do is so important.



## Spotlight on

## Sam Waterfall: Missing People Trustee

### Tell us about your role

My main role is as a Member of the Board of Trustees, but I have additional responsibilities as Chair of the Fundraising & Marketing Advisory Board and as a Member of the Ethics Committee.

My work is very much about leadership, guidance, and decision-making to support the Director Team in their day-to-day management of the charity's operations.

One of the reasons I was selected as a Trustee was to share my insight into how to increase awareness of the cause and reach to people affected by missing through digital marketing.

### What have been some of your greatest challenges as a Trustee in lockdown?

Many of the Missing People team have faced real challenges to keep the charity's services functioning throughout the pandemic. My role has been much more behind-the-scenes.

Most worryingly, Covid-19 has simultaneously impacted mental health and so many other risk factors associated with missing while also negatively impacting charitable giving, donations and fundraising.

So, without a doubt, the greatest challenges faced by the Trustees during the lockdown have been to oversee the reorganisation of the charity, the recalculating of the budget and the huge piece of strategy work undertaken by the Director Team to re-think and re-shape



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the organisation to adapt to delivering the services of the charity in our new altered reality.

### What recent achievement(s) are you most proud of?

I'm proud of many things the charity has achieved in the last year. First and foremost, everyone's incredible resilience and tenacity in continuing to deliver the charity's services against the odds. I'm proud of the Director Team and their leadership. The traditional Night of Light Gala Dinner was bravely pivoted into a very impressive online fundraiser. Likewise, the Carol Service – such a fixed in-person feature of the calendar – became an equally moving virtual event. And I'm hugely impressed by the digital transformation and the work of the team to deliver the new

website to serve all people affected by missing and our vital supporters.

### How has Covid-19 affected your role and the services you provide?

The pandemic has forced many decisions and changes. For all the cutbacks, challenges, and difficulties, I believe that in many ways the urgency and necessity to make changes has actually brought out the best in us. We've dug deep. We've drawn on inner reserves. We've got creative. And we've become closer as a team. We've got a grounded and considered new strategy to build forward from and we're ready to face the future and continue to uphold on the values and deliver on the unwavering objectives of the charity.

# An Open Letter to a Missing Person

Ju went missing in May 2017 following the death of her mother. Thankfully, with the support of Missing People, she was able to return home and get help. As we pass the anniversary of Ju's missing experience, she felt compelled to write something directly to people who are currently missing in the hope that it might help someone else.



*I hope that this letter finds you safe and well and I hope that you won't be offended by my writing to you. You've been on my mind and the words that I have are words that I wanted to share with you alone. You matter, you will be listened to, you will be heard. You will find no judgement here, it is a safe place. We don't need to know your story but we will sit with you and listen if you need to tell it. You are not alone. You matter. You are missed.*

*I wonder where you are right now, what you are doing with your day, how you are feeling about tomorrow. I wonder if you are at peace with yourself or if you find yourself in turmoil and unhappy with life. I wonder if you have somewhere to be, someone to be with and a hope for the future.*

*I hope that as you read this letter you will have a sense of belonging a sense of being understood a sense of friendship a sense of the promise of new beginnings. I hope that you are feeling safe and aware that you have choices, you always have choices.*

*I am thinking of you today because today marks four years since I too became lost, four years since I walked out of my home unsure of the future, too afraid to look backwards, too afraid to look forwards. All of our stories are different all of our hurts unique to us but we share one common thing, we are all people who for whatever reason have struggled or are struggling with our circumstances. The fear of staying the fear of going the fear of returning.*

*My friend, you are not alone. You cannot be a 'missing person' unless somebody misses you. You are valuable you are worthy you are precious. You deserve to be heard, you deserve to be safe.*

*If you are able to read this, please get in touch with Missing People on 116000. They helped me to re-find myself and never judged.*

*I shall be thinking of you,*

*Lots of love,*

*Ju*

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