

**Scottish National Missing Person's Framework**  
**Implementation Project**  
**Project Report (Full) Year Two**  
**July 2020 - March 2021**

**missing  
people**

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

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## Project Background

There are more than 20,000 missing incidents reported to Police Scotland every year, with many more incidents going unreported. In 2018-2019, 60% of investigations related to someone who has been missing more than once, and 63% of investigations related to children.<sup>1</sup> In 2017, Scottish Government published The National Missing Persons Framework for Scotland, which puts Scotland firmly ahead of the curve in its approach to safeguarding and supporting missing people.

The Framework exists as good practice guidance for professionals who are working with and supporting missing people and their families. The Framework's aims are **to prevent people from going missing in the first place, and limit the harm associated with people going missing**. These aims are broken down into four objectives; **prevent, respond, support and protect**:

- Objective 1: To introduce preventative measures to reduce the number of missing persons episodes
- Objective 2: To respond consistently and appropriately to missing persons episodes
- Objective 3: To provide the best possible support to both missing people and their families
- Objective 4: To protect vulnerable missing people and reduce the risks of harm.

*'A missing person is anyone whose whereabouts are unknown and; where the circumstances are out of character; or the context suggests the person may be subject to crime; or the person is at risk of harm to themselves or another.'* – National Missing Persons Framework 2017

Responsibilities of key agencies when responding to missing are summarised as **eight commitments** that require local and national action:

- 1) Agencies to ensure that prevention planning takes place locally for vulnerable individuals and groups
- 2) Agencies to ensure that people most at risk of going missing are treated as a priority at a local level
- 3) Agencies to exchange proportionate information to ensure that missing people are located quickly
- 4) Agencies to adopt a consistent approach to risk assessment when someone goes missing
- 5) Agencies to hold return discussions with young people and adults after they have been missing
- 6) Agencies to ensure that specialist support is made available to people who have been missing and their families
- 7) Scottish Government to oversee a programme of activity to raise awareness of missing people
- 8) Scottish Government to ensure that risks of harm are highlighted in all training and guidance.

Some excellent first steps have been made since The Framework was launched, including a national training programme for frontline professionals to raise awareness of The Framework and how to deliver effective Return Discussions; the local piloting of protocols to prevent high risk groups being reported missing; and the development of educational resources for young people.<sup>2</sup>

The Scottish Government's Missing Persons Team has worked hard to disseminate The Framework and to secure support for its agreed definition of missing persons and its shared approach to risk assessment. However, as of 2019, some local areas had not yet identified a partnership to lead on missing persons, or a champion to lead the local implementation of The Framework – key actions to ensure people at risk of

<sup>1</sup> Police Scotland Missing Persons Annual Report 2018/2019.

<sup>2</sup> These resources are available here: <https://www.runawayhelpline.org.uk/scotland/resources>.

going missing are treated as a priority, locally. Furthermore, challenges in implementing The Framework were identified as the following:

- Local information sharing between different agencies
- The consistent use of The Framework's standard approach to risk assessment
- Local agreement on which agency is best placed to deliver Return Discussions
- Knowledge of good practice in preventing and responding to missing incidents
- Limited awareness of support services available for people at risk of being reported missing and families of missing people.

In July 2019, Scottish Government provided £70,000 of funding to Missing People for 9 months of project delivery, the first year of a two year programme of consultancy, training and good practice sharing to ensure the implementation of The National Missing Persons Framework across Scotland, until March 2020.

The first year of the project involved Missing People working with multi-agency professionals in 3 local areas in Scotland – Dundee, Edinburgh, and Fife, to identify areas of good practice and areas for development in these areas, against Framework objectives. The project report for year one can be found [here](#).

In April 2020, Scottish Government provided £90,000 of funding to Missing People, and Missing People were able to continue our work in additional local areas across Scotland for a further 12 months. Missing People is uniquely placed to carry out this work, as the only national charity that supports missing and returned children and adults as well as their families left behind.

## Missing People's Role

With 25 years of frontline experience in supporting missing people and their families, Missing People work in collaboration with a range of partners across the UK, including local police forces, the UK Missing Persons Unit, and the Child Exploitation Online Protection Centre (CEOP).

This project was an opportunity to grow Missing People's role in Scotland and to share our specialist knowledge of missing by providing support to teams implementing The National Framework across two years. The project was designed to complement Scottish Government's and Police Scotland's commitment to create a national response to protect vulnerable missing people from harm. It also builds on Missing People's strong working partnership with Police Scotland, following a renewed partnership signing in 2018; and our receipt of multi-year funding from the Scottish Government to increase awareness and the use of our services for young people.

Missing People has supported every stage of the development and implementation of The Framework – from being a key member of The Framework Development Steering Group, leading the partnership to deliver training to frontline professionals on Return Discussions, and working with Members of Scottish

Parliament to gather political support from all parties for The Framework's implementation. The project was an opportunity to take this knowledge into supporting frontline implementation.

## Part One: Project Overview and Findings

### Project Aims

The project aims were as follows:

- To ensure that local partnerships and agencies in three new, additional local areas to Year 1 understand the priorities and responsibilities for improving the local response to missing persons and their families in line with The Framework.
- To ensure local partnerships and agencies continue to be more aware of good and innovative practice in preventing missing, inclusive of the areas already worked with in Year 1
- To develop an online 'toolkit' for professionals working with missing adults, children and families in Scotland
- To deliver Scotland's first national conference on missing and good practice.

The project team continued to report to and receive input from The Scottish National Advisory Group on missing throughout Year 2 of the project, which is comprised of leads from Scottish Government, Police Scotland, The University of Glasgow, Shelter, and Missing People.

The selection of three local areas in which to work was decided through an application process, guided by the National Advisory Group. Areas were asked to: detail their current local partnership arrangements for missing; tell us about up to 3 areas in which they demonstrate good practice around missing children and/or adults and their families; and tell us about up to 3 areas for development that they thought would benefit from Missing People's expertise in supporting local professionals to more closely implement practice within The Framework. Renfrewshire, North Lanarkshire, and Moray were the areas chosen, based on where Missing People could add the most value across all 3 areas, within the project time frame. The findings from these areas have been anonymised for the purposes of this document.

### Project Activity & Key Outputs

In order to achieve the project aims, the following key activities were agreed with the National Advisory Group:

- Continue the National Coordinator role to continue to be a point of contact for local areas in Year 1 and develop relationships with partners in new local areas to provide support and guidance to them throughout the project in Year 2.
- Support professionals to implement The National Framework by mapping, reviewing and auditing current local approaches in the three new local areas.
- Continue to support professionals across areas from Year 1 and the new areas to implement The National Framework by providing advice, assistance and training in developing a new response in line with The Framework.

- Develop a 'Toolkit' for professionals across Scotland working with missing adults, children and their families
- Create online Return Discussion training for professionals from multiple sectors completing Return Discussions with adults and children
- To deliver a second annual conference to share good and promising innovative practice for practitioners involved in preventing and responding to missing incidents. *Due to Covid-19 and the conference from Year 1 being delayed, it was decided to hold the Year 1 conference in November 2020 to share good practice, without holding a Year 2 conference.*

In July 2020, Missing People appointed a new National Coordinator for Scotland, based in Glasgow. The National Coordinator continues to be a crucial presence in Scotland, able to build relationships with partners both in the three chosen local areas, and across Scotland more widely.

As per Year 1 of the project, in Year 2, in order to support professionals to implement The Framework locally and identify existing good practice, the mapping and reviewing of local policy and protocol was completed for each local area. This included reviewing policy and other relevant documentation relating to missing adults and children from Police Scotland, NHS, education, and local authority partners. Documentation was assessed for clear purpose, reference to relevant legislation and national guidance, and good practice.

A set of recommendations for improvement was then created with input from conversations about front-line practice with professionals from Police Scotland, NHS, education, local authorities and private care settings.

Findings and recommendations were then shared with each individual division, respectively, including the identification of good practice in each.

The project team achieved the following:

- Workshops with **72 professionals** to map the respective journeys of missing adults and children in order to clarify roles and responsibilities, locally. Learning was shared with professionals who attended in a document that can be referred to by all staff
- Online Return Discussion training for adults and children to **155 professionals**, including for local areas who did not receive face to face training in Year 1 of the project due to Covid-19.
- Over **125 delegates** attended our Good Practice Sharing Conference which was held in November 2020
- The creation of an **online 'good practice' toolkit** for professionals in Scotland working with missing adults, children and their families
- The distribution of a **7-minute briefing video** to Police Scotland, NHS and local authority areas across Scotland to inform them of Missing People's free, core services available in Scotland.

## Summary of Project Findings

Through the mapping and reviewing stage of the project's delivery, the project team identified a number of areas of good practice and areas for further development in the response to missing.

Across three areas the project's key findings in relation to good practice were:

- NHS Mental Health Services and Residential Children’s Care Homes have guidance in place for responding to missing people. While informal in the case of some Mental Health Services, Return Discussions are taking place in all these settings.
- Partnership work with Barnardo’s is allowing children and young people in Area 2, and all children in Area 1, to have the option of an independent person completing their Return Discussion.
- Evidence of existing good multi-agency working between Police Scotland, Children’s Services and residential homes, with regular communication and meetings.

Across all three areas the project’s key findings on areas for improvement were:

- Return Discussions are not being offered to everyone. In particular, adults without health and social care involvement are generally not being offered a Return Discussion.
- The need for a clear local missing person protocol which outlines roles and responsibilities of each agency at every stage would be very beneficial. This would clarify who the lead agency should be for completing Return Discussions and how relevant information should be shared among key agencies.

## Project Findings: Good Practice Key Themes

### Multi-Agency Working

Multi-agency working is vital in responding to missing for all stages of an effective response to missing including effective risk assessments; addressing the reasons why someone goes missing; providing necessary support to those who are at risk or have gone missing; and reducing the likelihood of future missing episodes.

*Multi-agency working involves the consideration of the support needs of an individual from all relevant agencies such as the police, education, NHS and the local authority in the context of a missing episode, or repeat missing episodes.*

Examples of good multi-agency working were seen in all three areas, which included regular operational meetings to discuss missing persons and established information sharing pathways. Some examples of good practice are as follows:

#### Area 1

Good multi-agency working exists between Police Scotland and local children’s services, with a daily phone call between police, a social work manager and a local residential home, in addition to weekly meetings.

#### Area 2

The Vulnerable Young Person Operational Group meets regularly to ensure that a consistent and structured approach to the identification, investigation, intervention and safeguarding of children and young people who are frequently going missing and/or who are at risk of being exploited. Following engagement with this project, private residential care providers will now also be invited to attend this meeting in future.

### Area 3

Joint planning between care homes and adult services takes place in order to review the support and prevention plans that are in place within these homes following a resident having had a missing episode. Return Home Interview Officers also shared with us that they have good working relationships and information sharing processes between Police Scotland, local children's residential homes, and schools. Police Scotland also regularly attend multi-agency meetings across Area 3.

### Health

Health is a key agency through which a person can be supported, both in the prevention of a missing episode or on a person's return. Local NHS protocol and guidance across all three areas provides opportunity for this prevention, support, and response to a missing person.

### Areas 1 and Area 2

Local NHS Missing Patient Policy across Area 1 and Area 2 is comprehensive in detailing the process to be followed should patients go missing from hospital or mental health in-patient services. There are clear structures and responsibilities for each profession when reporting a missing person and responding to their disappearance.

### Area 3

NHS Missing Person Guidance in Area 3 sets out clear expectations for health care staff on what to do when a patient goes missing from hospital, or from home. Protocol exists for staff to be proactive in identifying patients who may be at risk of going missing, for them to put measures in place in order to identify when a person has gone missing and speak to patients about their rights to leave any healthcare setting.

We also found that Return Discussions are frequently taking place within NHS services across all three areas. Although informal, and sometimes termed 'Return to Ward Discussions,' these conversations are a crucial point of engagement with a returned person and provide opportunity to safeguard and prevent further missing episodes. In Area 3, Return Discussions are most prominent in care home settings. In Area 1 Return to Ward discussions frequently take place with hospital staff. Informal Return Discussions are taking place in Area 2 for inpatients, and with those who have returned from missing who have been under the care of NHS services, by the Community Mental Health Team.

*'Evidence suggests that up to 80% of adults who go missing have one or more mental health problems ... adults with dementia, although only making up around 3% of the people who are reported missing, remain one of the most vulnerable groups.'* - National Missing Persons Framework, 2017

### Supporting Children Missing from Residential Care

Local guidance for supporting children and young people missing from residential care exists in all three areas. In Area 3, the *Joint Protocol for Police Scotland and Children's Social Work* is an example of good practice that clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of each agency involved in the response to a missing child or young persons and is grounded in the aims of The Framework. In Area 1, agencies have

adopted The National Missing Persons Unit's *Children and Young People Missing from Residential and Community Setting's Joint Protocol for Police Scotland and Children's Social Work*.

*Children accounted for 63 per cent of missing person investigations in Scotland between 2018 and 2019, of which 50 per cent were looked-after. The right support for children who go missing is crucial to identify any ongoing risk or factors which may make them more likely to go missing again, or establish whether they have come to harm whilst away.*

Furthermore, children and young people missing from residential care are consistently being offered a choice as to who completes their Return Discussion across all three areas, according to the following practice:

#### Area 1

Area 1 has recently begun working in partnership with Barnardo's. This partnership will enable Area 1 to give children and young people in residential care the option to have a Return Discussion with a worker from Barnardo's, should they choose. Barnardo's will also be completing Return Discussions for all children missing from home, locally.

#### Area 2

*The Safer Choices Project* run by Barnardo's is open for agencies in Area 2 to refer any returned children or young people for a Return Discussion to be completed by a Barnardo's worker, should they choose.<sup>3</sup>

*Offering a child or young person a choice as to who completes their Return Discussion can be particularly valuable should they not want to speak to residential staff, or may be very new to the care provider or residential home and have no prior established relationships with staff.*

#### Area 3

In Area 3, residential care home staff are proactively working to identify who is best placed to complete a Return Discussion. Options for children and young people in residential care include their Return Discussion being completed by Area 3 Youth Justice Workers, or their social worker. Young People are also proactively encouraged to contact *Who Cares? Scotland* if they are in need of any advocacy support, and/or want someone from this agency to complete their Return Discussion.

<sup>3</sup> However, limitation of current funding means that this service cannot be used in all cases.

## Project Findings: Areas for Development and Recommendations

### A Need for a Formal Return Discussion Procedure

Currently, no formal Return Discussion procedure exists in Area 1, 2 or 3. It is not clear who the lead agency is for completing Return Discussions for all missing adults and children, nor is there any formal process for information sharing following Return Discussions, as well as an absence of a standardised Return Discussion form. There is a gap in support for all 3 areas, with returned adults and children who are *not* already receiving any support from local services, not receiving a Return Discussion. In Area 1, there are currently no formal arrangements for Return Discussions to be completed on acute wards in hospitals, and in Area 3, Return Discussions are not generally being completed for adults who are missing from home.

In all 3 areas local information sharing pathways should be formalised in order to establish how relevant information from Return Discussions should be shared among key agencies. These pathways should address information sharing at the point of return, and how information can inform prevention work and care planning. Particular consideration is needed in all three areas regarding how relevant information from the Return Discussions would be shared back to Police Scotland.

#### Recommendations:

- A clear process should be in place regarding each agency's actions to support missing persons upon their return. As per The National Missing Persons Framework, Return Discussions should be completed within 1 week of a person's return, following a Prevention Interview (Safe and Well Check) by Police Scotland. We suggest that any new Missing Persons Protocol and practice emphasises the difference between a Prevention Interview by police, and a Return Discussion. This distinction will help ensure that both interviews are completed with, or offered to, all returned children and adults as separate discussions, as per The Framework.
- We recommend the introduction of a process through which the most appropriate professional can be assigned to deliver Return Discussions within 1 week of a person's return (with initial contact within 72 hours) as per The Framework for all adults and children. A process should also be established to monitor quality assurance of these Return Discussions. Previous good practice in Scotland has seen the completion of Return Discussions by multiagency partners coordinated by the Missing Person's Operational Coordinator (MPOC) for Police Scotland and ensures that all relevant information has been shared and used to update care plans and/or risk assessments.
- Any process should consider how Return Discussions are offered, referred to, explained, and who is best placed to offer and complete the Return Discussion. Missing People offered to discuss this further with managers and front-line staff, and it is hoped that our online Return Discussion training will also help support the effective delivery of Return Discussions.

## Improved Support for Missing Persons and their Families

The project team found a lack of local signposting to support services for missing persons and their families, including to Missing People and other third sector organisations in all three local areas.

### Recommendations:

- Signposting to Missing People’s core services should be included within standard procedures for all agencies, where possible – to include signposting on documentation, leaflets and information supplied to missing persons and their families during and after a missing episode. Signposting provided to missing people and their families and/or carers should also include Purple Alert, developed by Alzheimer Scotland,<sup>4</sup> where appropriate, and The Herbert Protocol.
- Missing People to deliver 1-hour inputs and share a 7-minute briefing video to local professionals to raise awareness of our core services, where required.

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<sup>4</sup> For more information, please visit:  
[www.alzscot.org/living-with-dementia/staying-independent/helpful-apps/purple-alert](http://www.alzscot.org/living-with-dementia/staying-independent/helpful-apps/purple-alert)

## Part Two: Project Successes and Challenges

### What Worked Well

In Year 2, we created a process through which areas could apply for our support. 11 local areas across Scotland submitted applications in which they were each asked to identify 3 areas of good practice around missing, and 3 areas of practice for development. This enabled the project team to be informed about local missing practice at the earliest possible opportunity. Further, although we were only able to choose 3 areas, we were able to evidence further need for our support in implementing The National Framework across Scotland through 8 other areas having applied.

Crucial to the successful outcomes of Year 2 of the project was a high level of multi-agency engagement from relevant sectors in all 3 local areas, as in Year 1. Missing People continued to be flexible and bespoke in our approach in response to all areas requiring different kinds of support. We also continued to be flexible with deadlines and all elements of project delivery, which were completed online due to Covid-19.

We repeated the same project process and stages from Year 1, completing the 'map,' 'review' and 'help' stages within each local area. We continued a holistic approach to the 'mapping' process of policy and procedure within each local area – assessing relevant documentation for good practice and identifying areas for development *and* speaking with front-line staff members to gain insight into what occurs in practice.

The facilitation of journey mapping workshops in all 3 areas were a key success of the project, resulting in identifying good practice, clarifying local procedure and responsibility for partners, and evidencing opportunities where partners could better work together when responding to and supporting missing adults, children and families. In particular, the missing adults journey workshop in Area 2 identified gaps in Return Discussion provision, and which agencies had the capacity to complete Return Discussions for each missing adult profile. As a result, these pathways were formalised through the development of a new local missing persons protocol.

In response to a need for training and support across Scotland, we created free, online Return Discussion training for front-line professionals working with missing children, adults and their families. The training was allocated to 167 professionals across Scotland. As of August 2021, an additional 90 licenses have been reserved for Year 2 areas and 20 licenses have been reserved for police working in 2 local areas from Year 1 and 2.

Over 125 professionals attended our Missing & Good Practice Conference, which was delivered online in November 2020, having been delayed due to Covid-19.

In April 2021, Year 2 of the project was completed with the launch of our free, online, 'good practice' toolkit for professionals working with missing adults, children and families across Scotland. The toolkit is organised according to The Framework's objectives, features good practice examples from Years 1 and 2 of the project, downloadable resources such as 'Return Discussion top tips,' and a 7-minute briefing video

on Missing People's free, core services, which are available in Scotland. We have successfully promoted the toolkit to local areas from Years 1 and 2, and all conference attendees.

Throughout the project, oversight from The National Advisory Group continued to be invaluable for our approach within all three local areas and with multiple agencies. Throughout Year 2, we continued to make professionals from multiple agencies aware of, and engage with, The National Missing Person's Framework, successfully sharing further good practice across different local areas. The toolkit has enabled us to share this good practice more broadly across Scotland, for free.

This project funding the continuation of Missing People's National Coordinator role for Scotland remained fundamental to relationship building to ensure local knowledge and the effective implementation of The Framework. The role has enabled Missing People to have a continuing presence in Scotland that allows for multiple opportunities to raise awareness of our Helpline and core services to Police Scotland, Education, NHS staff, private care providers, and local authority staff. As we have previously highlighted in our Year 1 project report, these agencies can then in turn, signpost more missing people and their families in Scotland to access wrap-around support that contributes to meeting The Framework's four objectives; to prevent, support, respond, and protect.

## Local Area Successes

### Area 1

In Area 1, the project team introduced the use of The Herbert Protocol as good practice and facilitated an input by Alzheimer's Scotland to local multi-agency professionals to introduce them to Purple Alert. We identified a need for clear local guidance for responding to children are missing from school; followed by the creation of a multi-agency protocol on children missing from school outlining the roles and responsibilities of different agencies at each stage of a missing incident.

### Area 2

In Area 2, the project team engaged and introduced local private children's residential homes into regular multi-agency liaison meetings, to which they were previously not a part. Since our work with local partners, Area 2 have developed and implemented a new multi-agency protocol for missing people that clarifies the roles and responsibilities of all local agencies in the response to missing children and adults – including agreeing the role of NHS staff in delivering return discussions, and the role of private care providers.

### Area 3

In Area 3, the project team increased awareness of the role of Missing People in supporting police with the search for missing children and adults, and in providing direct support to children and adults; as well as the increasing awareness of prevention and early intervention measures for adults living with dementia who go missing, through joint work with Alzheimer's Scotland.

## Feedback

A feedback survey was completed at the end of the project by all 3 areas. We asked those who responded to the survey how straightforward they found the process of engagement with the project on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 meant 'very difficult' and 5 meant 'very straightforward.'

- 91% (10 of 11) respondents scored the process as a 4 or 5, with the remaining respondent scoring the process a 3

We asked why that score was given, and feedback includes:

- "There was plenty of opportunity to contribute, and a lot of useful discussion."
- "It has run pretty smoothly, and staff have been very helpful and approachable."
- "Presented well and explained well."
- "I have found the communication from Missing People to be efficient and reliable, which makes engagement easy."
- "I think the guidance and management of this project has been excellent. There has been clear communication throughout the process and the coordination of the patient journey event was very good."

We asked what went well in our engagement with the area. The main themes here were:

Communication:

- "All communication following the invite and post event was good."
- "Quick responses to queries, informative."
- "Presented well, engaged with all. Very good communication regarding each aspect and facilitated session."

Listening:

- "Listening to what we needed."
- "There has been a high degree of listening from Missing People."

Oversight and management of the project:

- "I liked the fact that the project team sent reminders of what we were doing and what we had to prepare [... they] helped keep the aims of the project in our minds, which meant that the meetings were productive."
- "Being approachable, reliable and efficient."

Focus on real life application:

- "[Missing People] are targeting our work with them to our local needs and interests."
- "You focused on real life scenarios and let each agency discuss their actions. This way we had a shared insight into the issue."

## Conference feedback

89% of delegates at the Good Practice Conference held in November 2021 said that their knowledge of the framework had improved by attending the conference, and they would rate the conference 4.6 out of 5. Other feedback included:

“Thank you very much for a well organised learning event today. It has highlighted that the local authority I work in are doing a lot of this work already, we will certainly utilise many of the resources shared today.”

“Thank you so much for all of the presentations. You have given me so many ideas to take forwards in my division.”

“Very informative and interesting conference - well done to all involved! Looking forward to the next one!”

## Benefits of the project

We asked respondents what they felt the benefits of Missing People’s work in their area would be:

Answer (multi-select options)	%	Number
A better understanding of opportunities for partnership working to support missing persons and their families in your area	100	11 of 11
The identification of areas of work that require support, guidance, and / or training to better support missing persons and their families	91	10 of 11
A better understanding of Missing People's services, including the charity's 24/7 support service	82	9 of 11
A better understanding of best practice around missing in Scotland	73	8 of 11
A better understanding of the National Missing Persons Framework	73	8 of 11

## Other feedback

“You have been instrumental in getting us to focus on work related to missing people and maintain momentum [...] Missing People has been a unifying resource that has provided a structure and framework for local discussions; it’s unlikely that we would have become so collaborative so quickly and consistently had it not been for involvement in the project. The result will, I hope, be the development of improved practice around missing people, including work around prevention. We now have a clear direction of travel and a much better understanding of achievable outcomes.”

“I was only vaguely aware of Missing Person's prior to my involvement in the project. Having been involved, I can see that it is a well-managed and essential service for such a vulnerable group.”

“Working with Missing People [...] gave our partnership area – across all age groups and service areas – a collective focus and momentum towards achieving best practice for people at risk of going missing [...] [including] on a collaborative, inter-agency basis to develop improved practice around Return Discussions. [...] We are [...] in a significantly better place to establish robust systems for people of all ages at risk of going missing than we would have been without Missing People’s support.”

## Challenges and Lessons Learned

Challenges of the project included the continuation of the Covid-19 pandemic. The best practice conference that should have been held during Year 1 of the project was delayed until November 2020, during Year 2 of the project. This was successfully delivered, but due to timing, the project's second good practice conference was delayed until December 2021.

Like Year 1, it was challenging during the project to balance key areas of priority within each area. For example, it was not possible for the project team to address all aspects of missing at once, such as children missing from home and adults missing from hospital, due to project time frames. Decisions were made to prioritise aspects of missing that the areas themselves wanted support with, and those that had the most multi-agency engagement to do so. For example, Area 2 had wanted the project team to support a cost-benefit analysis of missing persons investigations and support. However, due to a lack of data and other local aspects of missing that needed prioritising, this was not completed.

The project identified a significant lack of local process for Return Discussions support for adults and children in all three areas. It was beyond the scope of this project to address this to the extent to which these adults and children are adequately supported as per The Framework. However, during Year 3 of the project, 'check-in days' with the local areas from Year 2 will enable any progress with Return Discussion process to be explored.