

Missing People's Police Partnership Annual Awards 2025

These awards recognise the dedication and hard work of individuals or teams involved in the response to missing people.

By highlighting successful practice and effective strategies, these awards promote the sharing of best practice among UK police forces. This can improve the overall effectiveness of missing person investigations as well as interactions and outcomes for missing people and their families.

Recognising the efforts to find missing persons can also provide some comfort to the families of the missing, showing them that their loved ones are not forgotten and that there is a dedicated effort to bring them home.

These awards can also bring attention to the challenges and complexities involved in missing person cases, advocating for better resources and support for UK police Forces.

Compassionate Service Award – An individual or team who have shown extraordinary empathy and support to the families of missing persons and/or people who have been missing.

Working in Partnership Award - An individual or team who have effectively collaborated with community members, professionals or organisations to safeguard missing people.

Prevention Work Award - An individual or team who are implementing changes and techniques to prevent missing episodes.

Special recognition award – Recognition of individuals or teams' efforts in leading the way to make change for missing people and their families and/or efforts to increase referrals to and improve relationships with Missing People charity.

COMPASSIONATE SERVICE AWARD NOMINEES

WINNER - A Mother's Journey Through Heartbreak and Hope: The Search for Luke Durbin – Major Incident Team – Suffolk Constabulary

The heartbreaking account of a mother, who shares her long and tumultuous journey following the disappearance of her son, Luke Durbin, in May 2006. Initially faced with inadequate police support, she fought tirelessly for justice and continued investigation. After 4.5 years, the Major Investigation Team took over, bringing renewed hope and diligence to the case. The author's relationship with the police transformed as dedicated officers like Andy Guy, John Brocklebank, Kevin Haywood, Mike Brown, Angie Stevens and her family liaison officers, Debbie Newell, Helen Clench who worked tirelessly to uncover new evidence and maintain transparent communication. Despite the ongoing search and the eventual transfer of Luke's case to the cold case review team, the author expresses gratitude for the compassionate and thorough efforts of the MIT, which restored her faith in law enforcement and allowed her to find some peace amid her heartache.

HONOURABLE MENTION - Notification and Media Policy – East Sussex Missing Persons Team

The East Sussex Missing Persons Team from Sussex Police is nominated for the Compassionate Service Award due to their exceptional support for families of individuals missing near Beachy Head, a well-known suicide spot. The team implements a Notification Policy that empowers families regarding communication about the deceased's status and a Media Policy that allows families to control media interactions. They diligently assist both local and international families, providing interpreters when needed and ensuring they feel heard throughout the process. Their compassionate approach, dedication, and emotional investment in each case have garnered heartfelt gratitude from the families they serve, highlighting their extraordinary service in difficult circumstances.

Enhancing Safety for Vulnerable Missing Persons and supporting families: The West Midlands Police Locate Team

West Midlands Police deals with over 16000 missing reports a year and has a dedicated team. The WMP Locate Team is an innovative department structured to ensure the safety of vulnerable missing persons. The investigative function works [0700 -2300 365](tel:07002300365) days a year and they are well versed in the tactic to locate missing people. Locate comprises several specialised teams that collaborate to address different aspects of missing person cases. Key components include the Investigation Teams, which focus on locating missing individuals. The Locate Family Liaison Officer role is a

crucial local initiative, providing compassion and guidance to families during investigations, similar to support offered in serious crime cases. These officers ensure families have a single point of contact and receive necessary support in stressful situations. The Missing Reduction Team actively screens and assesses cases of frequently missing children, identifying risks and implementing safeguarding measures to reduce the incidence of missing persons. All under 18 missing and found children are subject of triage with the individual 7 local authorities to ensure safeguarding is addressed at the earliest opportunity. This has resulted in a sustainable and excellent approach to partnership working and information sharing. Overall, the WMP Locate Team is dedicated to protecting and supporting both missing individuals and their families.

Outstanding Service in Missing Person Coordination – PC Yocksan Bell – Police Service of Scotland

This nomination highlights Constable Yocksan Bell's exceptional contributions as the Edinburgh Tactical Missing Person Co-ordinator. With nearly 28 years of police service, he has dedicated the last 11 years to improving practices and procedures related to missing persons, significantly reducing risk and vulnerability for affected individuals and their families. His unwavering commitment to collaboration, innovation, and continuous improvement has led to notable advancements within the Edinburgh Policing Division and has had a lasting positive impact on the community. Yocksan's exemplary work ethic and passion for his role make him a deserving candidate for recognition.

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WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP AWARD NOMINEES

WINNER - Enhancing Child Protection: PC Jamie Dickens Impact on Missing Children in Cumbria

Jamie, the Child Exploitation and Missing Detective Sergeant at Cumbria Constabulary, has played a vital role in reducing the number of missing episodes involving children in care through his dedication and innovative partnership strategies. Leading a team of four officers, he has effectively managed the responsibilities of Missing, Trafficked, and Exploited Coordinators by utilising data analytics to identify high-risk care settings and fostering strong relationships with care providers. His involvement in the Philomena protocol and the establishment of complex safeguarding teams has further strengthened support for vulnerable children. By embedding a child-centred approach within the police force and providing essential training, Jamie ensures prompt responses to missing reports and holds partners accountable, ultimately enhancing the safety and well-being of children in the community.

HONOURABLE MENTION - Enhancing Missing Person Responses for Individuals with Dementia – Police Service of Scotland

In 2018, Police Scotland's Edinburgh Division partnered with Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership, Scottish Care and Alzheimer Scotland to implement the UK recognised Herbert Protocol, a form designed for families of individuals with dementia to aid in missing person investigations. Edinburgh was one of the first areas in Scotland to implement, and then using learning from this, the Edinburgh team co-worked with national partners, expanding to a national level across Scotland in 2021 (across 13 Police divisions and 31 Health and Social Care Partnership areas). Following its success, a further partnership with Alzheimer Scotland led to the launch of the Return Discussion Edinburgh Pilot in April 2022, transitioning the delivery of return discussions to trained Dementia Advisors. This approach has improved support for families and established safety planning to reduce the recurrence of missing incidents. Both initiatives align with Scotland's National Missing Persons Framework and underscore Police Scotland's commitment to enhancing safety and wellbeing for vulnerable individuals and their families. Feedback from families and partner agencies has been overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the effectiveness of this collaborative effort.

Humberside Early Intervention Programme - Southbank Locate team

The Locate team has been recognised by HMIC for excellence and has conducted peer reviews to aid other forces in establishing missing persons teams. Humberside Police has introduced an early intervention program for frequent or complex cases, assigning an officer to each vulnerable individual. They hold weekly reviews to highlight those who are most frequent or complex or with a concerning missing episode these then will be reviewed and if deemed to meet the threshold will be allocated a SPOC who will link in with partner agencies to ensure a wraparound approach to reducing the missing and long-term strategies to prevent or decrease the missing & the risk. In Grimsby, efforts have concentrated on a female missing person with PTSD, resulting in better relationships with her family and partner agencies, which has decreased her absences. Humberside also holds daily meetings with social care to address potential issues involving at-risk children. The nomination was clear that this is a team effort and have a buy in from social care and dementia UK & other partners to work in partnership / hold weekly risk management meetings.

Impact at the Children's Home - PC Andrew Miles – Dyfed Powys Police

Andrew, affectionately known as Milo, has been a regular visitor to a children's home for several years, working to foster positive relationships between the young residents and the police. Understanding the trauma many of these young people have faced, Milo's engaging personality and approachability help to change their often-negative perceptions of law enforcement. He talks to them about safety in the community and provides guidance on whom to turn to in times of trouble. The young people eagerly await his visits, often preparing tea and cake for him, and he occasionally

joins them for dinner. Milo also shares valuable information about local events and activities, including promoting the police cadets program, which has seen participation from some of the young people. His dedication and friendly demeanour make him an exceptional police officer, highlighting the need for more officers like him to connect with children in care. The Manager of the care home stated 'I would just like to get across the positive impact Milo has had on the young people we care for, his confidence and bubbly personality make him a joy to be around'.

Enhancing Missing Persons Protocols - David Gallagher and Christopher Sutherland – British Transport Police

David Gallagher and Christopher Sutherland of the British Transport Police (BTP) have implemented significant improvements in handling missing persons cases as part of the Right Care Right Person initiative. Their objectives include reducing unnecessary missing persons notifications, minimizing organisational risks, and updating the Missing Persons Policy according to government standards. Their partnership work has led to the creation of a comprehensive BTP Missing Person Guidance, ensuring consistency in responding to incidents. By refining processes, they have reduced the number of inappropriate reports requiring BTP intervention by 40%, allowing for more efficient use of resources and improving national safeguarding efforts as the percentage of mispers found have increased from 3.49% to 12.19%. Their leadership has strengthened both internal practices and collaboration with external police forces, ultimately ensuring that vulnerable individuals receive the appropriate care and support they need.

Championing the Cause of Missing Children and Adults - PC Stuart Barnett

Stuart has been nominated for his exceptional contributions to the cause of missing children and adults. He expanded the Operation Encompass initiative, improving notifications to schools and colleges in Hertfordshire, which enhanced the safeguarding of vulnerable missing children and decreased their disappearance rates. By collaborating with Hertfordshire Children Services and Education partners, he established effective information sharing protocols and secured funding to streamline the referral process through the COMPACT missing persons system, saving numerous officer hours. Additionally, he initiated "Operation Sabin," focusing on vulnerable missing adults and ensuring they receive support from Local Adult Safeguarding Services. His dedication and successful partnerships have made him a respected ambassador for the Police Service among colleagues and safeguarding partners.

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PREVENTION WORK NOMINEES

WINNER - Operation Satin: A Pioneering Initiative in Preventing Missing Persons - Northamptonshire Office of Police Commissioner

This nomination highlights the exemplary collaboration between the Operation Satin Team of the Northamptonshire Office of the Police and Fire Commissioner and the Northants Missing Person Unit. They initiated a groundbreaking program focused on early intervention and prevention work by their Early Intervention Workers to identify support needs early on to reduce further missing episodes and reduce risks for young individuals who had three or less missing episodes. Op Satin has dramatically decreased the number of children who go repeatedly missing. To date, 92% of the 263 young people visited as part of Op Satin have not since been reported as missing. This initiative not only reduced police workload but also fostered trust and communication between families and law enforcement, ultimately protecting vulnerable youths from risky situations. The team's dedication and success have inspired similar efforts in other police forces.

Successful Implementation of Training Package for Children's Care Staff - Cleveland Police Missing Persons Team

The team has created a training package focused on the Philomena protocol and partnership information sharing forms, which is delivered to staff in children's care placements. This training includes a practical search component to mimic the search process staff will perform when handling missing children's cases. Since its launch in July 2023, approximately 300 care staff have participated, receiving positive feedback on the training. They are now liaising with their local authorities to take over the responsibility and / or to work in collaboration delivering the training.

Acknowledging the Efforts of Missing People (Problem solving) Team - Northumbria Police

The team consists of 3 police officers and 4 police staff dedicated to identifying individuals at high risk of harm related to missing reports, as well as 3 additional officers focused on protecting those at risk from exploitation. Comprising motivated and skilled individuals, the team collaborates with various partners to reduce risks for vulnerable populations across six local authority areas. Their impactful work, supported by data and feedback, often goes unnoticed, yet they deserve recognition for their relentless efforts in the face of daily challenges. Additionally, the team oversees 66 Dedicated Liaison Officers engaging with the sex working community to enhance their safety.

Innovative Solutions for Dementia Care: GPS Tags for Missing Individuals - PC John Porter - South Yorkshire Police

The SYP's innovation fund encourages employees to propose beneficial ideas, exemplified by PC John Porter's initiative for funding GPS tags to help locate individuals with dementia who go missing. This innovative solution not only enhances the speed of locating vulnerable individuals but also promotes their independence and allows them to stay in their communities longer, providing reassurance to their families. This idea has been expanded upon by local safeguarding board and education professionals to roll out further.

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SPECIAL RECOGNITION NOMINEES

WINNER - Transformative Impact of PC Miles on Vulnerable Young Person - South Wales Police

This nomination highlights the exceptional prevention work of PC Miles, who successfully engaged with a 15-year-old girl, referred to as T, who has a troubled history marked by mental health challenges, self-harm, and over 100 missing episodes. Recognising T's vulnerabilities and the lack of trust she had in professionals, PC Miles focused on building a trusting relationship with her. His dedicated efforts led to significant positive changes in T's life, including her academic achievements and a dramatic reduction in her missing episodes. T expressed her gratitude to PC Miles, sharing her progress and newfound stability. His commitment to tailoring support around T's needs has fostered a safe environment for her, enabling her to envision a brighter future. Since the nomination, the related YP has since joined SWP youth cadets and has expressed her wishes to use her experiences to help other young people who are now in the same place in attempts to peer support them through their difficulties.

Transforming Metropolitan Policing Practices on Missing Person Protocols - DI Chris Minnighan

Chris has dedicated over a third of his policing career to the improvement of the policing response to missing within the Met and beyond. He has been instrumental in developing strategies that prioritise risk and vulnerability. He has worked closely with national and international leads to develop policy and guidance such as his initiative 'Missing or Not Missing' guidance and Joint Responsibility Agreements. Most recently he has collaborated with NCIS and the National Police Directorate on the national guidance for Norwegian Police on the handling of missing cases. Chris has also played a crucial role in enhancing protocols for dealing with missing dementia sufferers and has ensured that good practice guidance is continuously updated based on organisational learning. Furthermore, he has represented the Met at Coroner's courts and has given evidence in over 20 cases, advocating for accountability and improvements. His collaborations with charities and academia have further refined approaches to reduce unconscious bias and enhance professional curiosity within policing. Chris's contributions have been pivotal in addressing major concerns and improving the Met's response to exploited children, leading to the removal of the Engage status.

Reducing Missing Episodes in Rural Scotland - PC Craig Barron

Craig has dedicated himself as the MPOC in N division, focusing on the Highlands, Shetland, Orkney, and the Western Isles as part of the Scotland Framework Implementation Project. His efforts aim to minimize missing episodes in these remote areas by collaborating with national coordinators and connecting various support services, including education and health. Acknowledging the risks of individuals going missing in such regions, Craig is actively working within his division to implement preventive measures and mitigate associated harms.

Dedication to Young Runaways - PC Lauren Wilson - Fife - Police Service of Scotland

PC Lauren Wilson has been the dedicated Young Runaway's Coordinator for Fife, Police Scotland, for over ten years. Her commitment and enthusiasm in fostering relationships with partner agencies have significantly improved the tracing and support of young missing persons. Known for her exceptional communication skills and educational background, Lauren is highly effective in her role, providing crucial support to both agencies and young individuals. Her investigative skills have enabled the early recognition of issues like child sexual exploitation, and she consistently advocates for the best interests of young people. Lauren's approach is highly valued by her partners, who frequently express their appreciation for her supportive and humorous nature.
