

## Has someone you know gone missing? What you need to know

Factsheet 1

**It is a traumatic experience when someone goes missing; however, it is critical that you take immediate action, especially when the person could be in danger.**

- Search their home or the place the person was last seen, in case the person is hiding or may have fallen and been injured. Remember that children can hide in very small spaces
- Look out for any notes or clues that may suggest where they may be
- Check to see if they have left you a message on your phone voicemail or email
- Contact family members, friends and the person's place of work to verify that they are actually missing and not simply somewhere unexpected.

It may be helpful to keep a record in a notebook of what you have done (including all phone calls) and anything that seems out of the ordinary or suspicious, to assist the police and help keep track of what still needs to be done.

Most people who go missing return, or are found within 48 hours, with only around 1% still remaining missing after a year. However, if you have established that someone is missing and you are concerned, report them as missing to your local police force immediately – remember, you **do not** have to wait 24 hours before reporting them.

### **Report the person missing**

Phone your local police force or visit your local police station. Many police forces in England

and Wales now use the 101 non-emergency number. The number for your local force can be found in the phone book, the police force website or online

[http://www.police.uk/?view=force\\_sites](http://www.police.uk/?view=force_sites)



**If it is an emergency and you feel that the missing person may be at risk of harm, dial 999.**

The police will take some details from you and provide a reference number. Make a note of this and any other details that they provide you.

### **Provide detailed information to the police**

The police will take a detailed report and it will be helpful if you can provide as much of the following information as possible. There is a form on page 3 of this leaflet that will help:

- Full name and date of birth for the missing person
- A physical description of the missing person, including what clothes and jewellery they were wearing (if known)

- A recent photograph of the missing person
- When they were last seen and by whom
- What their intentions were when last seen and whether they completed these (e.g. they left to go to work or visit a friend)
- Tell the police whether or not the missing person has a mobile phone with them and give the police the number. Tell the police what response you get when calling that number
- Names, addresses and contact numbers of family members and their close friends
- If the missing person is a child, provide contact details for the parents of their close friends
- Any other relevant circumstances that may increase the risk to the missing person. For example:
  - Recent changes in behaviour or behaviour that is out of character
  - Relevant medical conditions that may affect their vulnerability, details of any prescription medication they take and whether they have this medication with them
  - Family or relationship problems
  - Employment or financial problems
  - School or college problems
  - Being a victim of bullying or harassment
  - Drug or alcohol dependency
  - Suffering from depression or you suspect that they may self-harm
  - Having previously considered or attempted suicide
  - Any suspicion that the missing person may have been abducted or may have been harmed by someone else
  - Any other information which may suggest that they are vulnerable or at risk.

## What the police do

The police will use the information that you supply to assess the level of risk that the person may be at while missing. The police will then consider all lines of enquiry which are appropriate and necessary in the circumstances. Should the missing person not be found following the initial lines of enquiry, then the investigation will be passed to a nominated officer within the police station who will deal with all further enquiries. This may be a specific named officer, or, in some instances, may be the officer on duty at the time.

Typical lines of enquiry may include, for example:

- Searching the home address of the missing person
- Searching the area where the person was last seen (if different to their home)
- Checking with local hospitals
- Checks on mobile phones and computers used by the missing person
- House to house enquiries
- Reviewing CCTV footage
- Co-ordinating media coverage to raise awareness and appeal for sightings
- Specialist searches (for example, using helicopters, divers or dogs) for high risk cases in particular

## Accessing additional support

It can be very distressing when someone goes missing. Take care of yourself and do not be afraid to ask others for help and support. The charity Missing People may be able to provide you with some additional advice, support and assistance with publicity. In some circumstances, Missing People may be able to assist by attempting to make contact with the missing person and communicate with them on your behalf.

Contact Missing People:

0500 700 700 (freephone number)  
 Website: [www.missingpeople.org](http://www.missingpeople.org)  
 Email: [info@missingpeople.org](mailto:info@missingpeople.org)

## What to do when the missing person is found or returns

If your friend or relative returns after you have reported them missing to police, you must contact the police to let them know. The police may wish to see the person to confirm that they have returned and that they are safe and well.

**If you require further information, there is a more detailed factsheet on what to do when someone goes missing which can be downloaded from the NPIA website (along with police missing persons guidance): [www.npia.police.uk/mpb](http://www.npia.police.uk/mpb)**

You may find it useful to use this space to record information and make notes, especially if a police officer is coming to speak to you. Don't worry if you cannot fill in all of the information, just complete as much as you can in order to assist the police with their investigation.

1. About the missing person	Complete as much information as you can here
Full name and address	
Age and date of birth	
Physical description <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Height</li><li>• Build (e.g. thin, medium, large)</li><li>• Ethnic appearance (e.g. White, Asian, Afro-Caribbean)</li><li>• Eye colour</li><li>• Hair colour and style</li><li>• Any glasses or contact lenses worn</li></ul>	
Any distinctive features such as tattoos, scars, birthmarks or any other distinguishing features?	
Do you have a recent photograph?	
If the missing person has a mobile phone with them, write down the number and the network (e.g. Orange, Vodafone) if you know it	
Does the missing person suffer from any medical condition, including mental health conditions? Do they need medication for this and do they have it with them?	
What are the circumstances of this person going missing and where were they last seen?	
<b>2. Information to keep handy</b>	
Police officer name and contact number:	
Police reference number:	

## Has someone you know gone missing? A reference guide

Factsheet 2

**It can be a traumatic experience when someone you know goes missing. This factsheet is intended as a starting point to help you by setting out a list of things to do, or to think about, when you first realise that someone has gone missing.**

### The first hour

It may be difficult to know what to do when someone goes missing; however, it is critical that you take immediate action, especially if the person could be in danger.

- Search their home or the place the person was last seen, in case the missing person is hiding or may have fallen or been injured
- Look out for any messages, notes or clues that may suggest where they are
- Contact family members, friends and their work or school to check that they are actually missing.

It may be helpful to keep a record of what you have done, every phone conversation you have had and anything that seems out of the ordinary or suspicious.

However, do not delay – if you have established that someone is missing, report them as missing to your local police immediately.

**Remember, you do not have to wait 24 hours before reporting someone as missing to the police.**

### Provide detailed information to the police

The police may take full details straight away or they may take some basic details to help them carry out initial enquiries and come back to you to obtain more detailed information if the person has still not returned. This is because most people return or are found quite quickly. Information that the police will find helpful includes:

- Physical description of the missing person, including details of birthmarks, scars, tattoos, glasses, etc and details of what clothes they are wearing, if known
- Any medication that they were taking, any medical issues they may have (including physical and mental illnesses such as depression). Let the police know if they have taken their medication with them or not
- What their last known movements were
- Any other information which may suggest they are vulnerable
- Anything unusual or out of character – think about the normal routine of the person who is missing and what they were doing at the time they went missing
- What you think the missing person may have taken with them. Tell the police if the missing person has not taken something with them that they would normally have with them (for example, keys, mobile phone, purse, etc). Check to see if they have taken their passport (if they have one)

- Details of the missing person's mobile phone number and network operator (if known)
- Details and information about the missing persons' computer or laptop, including email addresses and details of social networking sites, blogs, personal websites or online information-sharing sites. You and/or the police may wish to access them to obtain information
- If the missing person's car or motorcycle is missing, you need to mention this to the police and give them a description and the registration number (if you know it).

Give the police as much relevant information as you can and let them know of any steps you have already taken to try to locate the missing person.

### **Make a list of contacts for the police**

This list should include contact details for other people who know the person who is missing and might be able to help the police, for example:

- Family
- Friends
- Their employer or school
- Anyone else who may have information on their whereabouts.

Remember to write down their full names, telephone numbers, home addresses, work numbers and work addresses if you know what they are. If you have already spoken to any of these people, tell the police and let them know what information they were able to provide.

If you are going to be making lots of phone calls to relatives and friends, you may find it best to do this in a way that keeps your own telephone free for receiving incoming calls, in case the missing person is trying to contact you. For example, you could use a friend's mobile phone.

If you leave the house, you might want to arrange for someone else to be there to answer your phone, or instead make sure that your voice mail or answering machine is switched on.

### **Make a list of possible locations**

- Consider places the person may have gone, such as places they like to visit or previous addresses and make a list of these places
- Include places where they have been found in this list, if they have ever been missing before.

### **Provide photographs**

- Find some recent photos of the missing person and give them to the investigating officer. Head shots are best if possible
- If you don't have any recent photos, make sure that you advise the police officer of the year the photo was taken and whether there are any differences in the person's appearance now
- If you have any video or DVD footage of the missing person, it may also be of use to the investigating team.

### **Advise the police if the missing person is a child at risk of harm**

- If the missing person is a child who may be at risk of harm, in certain circumstances the police may be able to launch a Child Rescue Alert
- If you think that your child may be taken outside the country for some reason (e.g., abducted by the other parent), tell the police as they can take certain measures to ensure that they are alerted if the abductor tries to leave the country. They can also arrange for an Interpol Yellow Notice to be circulated for the missing child and for the details to be added to Interpol's missing children database.

## Contact local hospitals

- The police may also be doing this, but if you contact them, this may reduce the time taken to locate someone. You may want to do this prior to reporting them missing
- Remember that if the missing person has been in an accident and is/was unconscious, they may not be able to give their name, so you also need to ask about any recent admissions where the person's name is unknown
- The police may have a local means of circulating an alert around the NHS trust area in which the person has gone missing
- The police are likely to contact their Coroner's Liaison Officer, to ask whether the local Coroner has received any details of any unidentified persons that meet the description of the missing person. The police may also contact the UK Missing Persons Bureau to check if they know of any unidentified persons found in other areas of the UK that might meet the description of the missing person. You may wish to check with the police to see if you can assist with these enquiries by providing any extra information that might be relevant or helpful.

## Searching for the missing person

- You may wish to search the areas your family member or friend went missing from, places they like to go, or where you last saw them. However, you need to ensure that you discuss this with the police. This is because the police will be managing the overall search strategy and you will need to ensure that any searches that you or other volunteers undertake are co-ordinated with them
- If the area the person went missing from was near a lake, river or sea, the police will have considered searching the water as part of their search planning. It is important that you co-ordinate with police and let specialist teams search dangerous areas.

- **Do not place yourself at risk of harm at any time.**

- If your family member or friend went missing in a remote area, for example while hill walking or mountaineering, the police may contact the local Highland or Lowland Search and Rescue team, who can assist with the search. You must always inform the police if you request assistance from a search and rescue team yourself, as the Police Search Advisor (PoISA) will need to co-ordinate the search. Again, do not place yourself at risk of harm
- Depending on the circumstances, the police will check their Custody system, just to check the possibility that the missing person has been arrested.

## Consider limiting access to the missing person's home or room

- Consider limiting access to the missing person's bedroom or home until the police have searched and collected evidence
- Remember that clothing, bedding and other personal items may hold important evidence and information for the police, so do not wash anything or clean their room. Do not touch their hairbrush or toothbrush, but ensure that these items are highlighted to the police as they may wish to take them for the collection of DNA. This is important if the person is missing for a long period.

## Make notes

- Keep a notepad with you at all times to write down information given to you by friends, family and the police
- Use it to record any questions you have thought of that you may wish to ask the police next time you speak to them
- Write down the name and number of the officer investigating the case and/or the police force's Missing Persons Co-ordinator
- Ask what the risk assessment is for the missing person is (low, medium or high) and make a note of it.

## Think about you

Take care of yourself and your family and do not be afraid to ask others for help or support where possible. A number of charities may be able to provide support and advice and contact details can be found in the factsheet *Organisations that can help* and online. You can assist the investigation better and be there for the missing person when they return or are located, if you take care of yourself.

## The first week

### Establish regular contact

- Ensure you have a point of contact within the police and establish how often they will be in contact to provide updates and/or how often and when you may contact them
- You may wish to speak to the investigating officer about the steps that are being taken to find the missing person. The police will provide information, where possible, on what is being done. You may wish to ask, for example: What searches have been conducted? Which organisations, such as the UK Missing Persons Bureau, have been contacted? Is the person listed as missing on the Police National Computer?

### Consider accessing additional support

- The disappearance of a close friend or relative can be very distressing. You might experience strong emotional reactions and find it difficult to cope
- Several charities may be able to provide you with help. Details of some of these organisations are listed on the factsheet *Organisations that can help*, which is available on the UK Missing Persons Bureau website [www.npia.police.uk/mpb](http://www.npia.police.uk/mpb) along with links to some of the charities such as Missing People. Many organisations are also listed on the internet
- You may find it helpful to read the document *Someone is Missing*, an emotional resource for families and friends of missing persons, available at:

- <http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/40259/20100213-0001/www.missingpersons.org.au/index.html>
- You may need to speak to your employer to advise them of the situation and discuss how to balance work and searching for the missing person.

## Publicity

Raising awareness of your missing friend or family member may assist in their location. Discuss with the police officer investigating the case to decide what publicity to do and what information should be provided to the media and what should not.

- **Posters** – You can create a Missing Person poster and put this up around their home address, around the area they went missing in and anywhere else you think best. The poster should include a photograph, details of the physical description of the missing person, especially any unusual or distinguishing features, such as tattoos or braces, when and where they went missing from and anything else which may assist members of the public to recognise them
- **Do not put your personal contact details on the poster** as this could place you in a vulnerable situation. Include the relevant telephone number for the investigating police force (a 24 hour number is best) and /or the charity Missing People, who have a Sightings telephone line which people can call to report a sighting of a missing person (0500 700 700)
- **Engagement with local media** – You may be able to liaise with the Media Officer for the investigating force to issue press releases and for media events
- **Internet publicity** – Consider creating a website or social networking page to highlight the details of the missing person and to capture information.

Be aware that if the media do become interested in the case, they may approach others for information on the missing person.

They may also run the story in a different way to what you expect.

If you feel you cannot handle the media yourself, ask a trusted family member or friend to act as a spokesperson.

Also bear in mind that the media sometimes have more news than they can use, so although you may have been interviewed or may have provided material for a news story, this does not guarantee that they will run the story.

More information on publicity can be obtained from the factsheet *How publicity can help*, available on the UK Missing Persons Bureau website [www.npia.police.uk/mpb](http://www.npia.police.uk/mpb)

### **Provide additional information to the police**

- Consider whether there are additional details that may be of assistance to the police. Expand your list of contacts to include anyone who may have seen the person before or after they went missing, for example: additional friends, acquaintances, extended family members, delivery companies, postal delivery staff, etc
- If you haven't already done so, provide the police with the contact details of your family's doctor and dentist. As part of their collection of details on the missing person, the police may wish to contact their doctor and dentist to obtain their medical and dental records.

### **Make a list of things others can do to help**

Make a list of things that volunteers can do for you and your family, in case someone asks how they can help (e.g. set up a social networking page on the internet, or create and circulate a poster).

### **If relevant, contact local shelters**

Depending on the circumstances, it might be worth contacting local homeless shelters or hotels to see if the missing person may be staying in one of these places.

### **Next steps**

If you have not already done so, you may wish to consider some of the following steps:

- Develop a plan and set a schedule with goals for continuing the search for the missing person. Work with the investigating officer to decide what role you and others can play in the long term search
- Schedule regular contact visits or telephone calls with the investigating officer to review the status of the investigation and to receive updates at a mutually agreed frequency. Keep in mind that the police may not be able to share some information with you. However, if at any stage you have new or important information, make sure you contact the investigating team immediately
- Find out what other organisations such as charities, local community teams and other support groups can do to assist you. For example, your Neighbourhood Watch group might be able to look out for the missing person and distribute posters. Details of some of these organisations are listed on the factsheet *Organisations that can help*, available on the UK Missing Persons Bureau website [www.npia.police.uk/mpb](http://www.npia.police.uk/mpb)
- Keep the community's awareness of the missing person high, by keeping the media interested and involved where possible
  - You may wish to seek out assistance from political figures, influential members of the community or anyone else who can help press interest in your case or get the missing persons photo and details in the press.
  - You might find it helpful to prepare a media pack, which includes information such as when and where the person went missing, their description, photographs and telephone numbers for people to call with information. You can then give this to local radio stations and any other interested media organisations. This will help you to ensure that awareness is kept high and will mean that you do not have to personally recount all of this information every time you speak to someone.

- Consider highlighting the case on the anniversary of their disappearance and their birthday, although these will be stressful times for you. This will keep awareness of the missing person high, even if it is a long time since they went missing
- Most people who go missing return or are found quite quickly. However, if your friend or family member has been missing for several years, it may be beneficial to produce and circulate an age-progressed image, to raise awareness of how the person will look now. There are several specialists who offer this service. More information can be obtained from your police force. They can request the details of specialists from the NPIA Specialist Operations Centre. The charity Missing People may also be able to provide information or assistance
- Consider all potential media options, Speak to your investigating officer and/or a helpful charity about contacting television shows such as *Missing Live* to raise awareness.
- Make sure you have given the investigating team everything that could help with the investigation, including the missing person's computers, relevant notes and so on
- Confirm that any DNA obtained for the missing person (e.g. from tooth and hair brushes) has been added to the National Missing Persons DNA Database held by the NPIA. This DNA sample will only be used to cross reference with missing and unidentified persons. It will not be added to the national criminal database or used for any other purpose. The DNA will also be destroyed once the missing person is found
- Confirm that the dental records for the missing person, if they are registered with a dentist, have been added to the National Missing Persons Dental Record Collection, held at the UK National Missing Persons Bureau
- Find out if fingerprints or palm prints are available for the missing person. These might be obtained from the missing person's property, for example. Confirm

that they are sent to the UK Missing Persons Bureau

- Periodically contact the police for updates to check that the person is still listed as missing on the Police National Computer.

### Need more help?

If you require more information, other factsheets can be downloaded from the NPIA website  
<http://www.npia.police.uk/mpb>

For additional copies, to enquire about the content of this document or request the information in an alternative format, please contact the UK Missing Persons Bureau on 0845 000 5481 or email [missingpersons bureau@npia.pnn.police.uk](mailto:missingpersons bureau@npia.pnn.police.uk)

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The information in this guide is not definitive and should be utilised in conjunction with police guidance and independent legal advice.

### Accessing additional support

It can be very distressing when someone goes missing. Take care of yourself and do not be afraid to ask others for help and support. The charity Missing People may be able to provide you with some additional advice, support and assistance with publicity. In some circumstances, Missing People may be able to assist by attempting to make contact with the missing person and communicate with them on your behalf.

Contact Missing People:

0500 700 700 (freephone number)  
 Website: [www.missingpeople.org](http://www.missingpeople.org)  
 Email: [info@missingpeople.org](mailto:info@missingpeople.org)

## Has someone you know gone missing? Coping with practical issues

Factsheet 3

**After you have reported a loved one missing, there are some practical issues which may need to be addressed if the person remains missing for more than a few days. You may find it hard to think about what to do during this distressing time, so below is a list of things that you may find helpful to consider.**

### **Inform the necessary people**

- Contact, or ask a supportive friend to contact, key individuals to advise them that the person has gone missing. For example: their employer, school, landlord and any other key family members or friends who may not know that the person is missing
- If appropriate, perhaps if the person has been missing for some time, you may need to consider cancelling any social engagements, business appointments or travel plans your loved one may have scheduled.

### **Personal Property**

- If the missing person lives alone, arrange for someone to collect or manage their post and regularly check on their house
- If your missing loved one has pets, make sure that someone takes on the responsibility of caring for them
- If someone will be driving the missing person's car, they should make sure that they have the appropriate insurance cover.

### **Finances**

- If the person remains missing for more than a few weeks, it may be necessary to check whether they have a mortgage, rent, household bills or other financial obligations. If so, contact the related organisations (e.g. banks or building societies) to notify them that the person is missing and see what arrangements can be made with regards to their financial commitments
- Depending on how long your loved one is missing for, it may be worth discussing with the police whether monitoring their bank account(s) may assist with the investigation.

### **Legal issues**

Only a very small percentage of people who go missing remain missing for a long time. However, if your relative or friend is missing for an extended period, you may find it helpful to obtain some legal advice; for example, to help manage issues such as your missing loved one's life insurance and pensions and to find out what to do with their personal property such as their house or car. Assistance with legal issues may be obtained from the Citizen's Advice Bureau or the Law Society.

## **Citizen's Advice Bureau**

Citizen's Advice Bureaux (CAB) provide free, confidential and independent advice from over 3,000 locations. Advice is available face to face and by telephone. Most CABs offer home visits and some also provide advice by email.

<http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk>

## **The Law Society**

The Law Society's website contains a searchable database to help you find a solicitor, along with information on what to expect from a solicitor, guides to common legal problems and advice on what to do if things go wrong. It also includes guidance on paying for legal services and finding specialist solicitors.

<http://www.lawsociety.co.uk/choosingandusing/findasolicitor.law>

## **Use of Private Investigators**

You may consider using Private Investigators if your loved one has been missing for some time. However, only do so if you are convinced that they can do something different from, or in addition to, what is already being done by the police. Otherwise, you may be wasting money which could be spent more productively in other ways.

It is best to discuss the involvement of a private detective with the police. They may have experience of dealing some of these individuals and may help you to decide whether or not to employ one. If you do decide to use a private detective, always:

- Check for references and be wary of claims that are 'too good to be true'
- Inform the police about your decision to hire a private investigator. It may be necessary for the police to speak to them before they become involved in the case
- Make sure you are paying a reasonable rate and insist that expenses are itemised and accompanied with receipts

- Notify the police of any information collected by the private investigator.

## **Psychics**

Missing person cases often attract the interest of psychics or clairvoyants. Although these individuals may genuinely wish to help, hearing their dreams and visions can cause distress and can either make you lose hope or give you an unrealistic sense of hope. Previous police searches for missing people actually show little or no evidence of any successful psychic involvement. If you do wish to consult a psychic, it may be helpful for you to consider the following points:

- Keep your expectations realistic, it is rare for a psychic to locate a missing person
- Consider the motive of the psychic, especially where they stand to gain financially for their involvement
- Ask how they work and how they receive their information. Ask if they have any evidence of previous successes
- Be careful about supplying information to the psychic, especially information that the police would prefer to be withheld or information that you and the missing person would rather was not made public
- Do not allow a psychic to go into the missing person's room unattended or allow them to remove anything from the room
- If any information is provided, pass it on to the police to establish the value of it
- Discuss financial compensation beforehand. Some psychics provide their services free, with the aim of helping people. Do not part with any money unless this has been agreed in advance, for example, for travel expenses.

## **Presumption of death**

The majority of people who go missing are found or return quite quickly. However, if your family member or friend has been missing for many years, you may eventually need to consider initiating the process to declare them legally dead.

Although this is a very hard decision and emotionally may be very distressing, this legal process is necessary to manage a number of legal and property issues; for example, in order to administer your missing loved one's estate, claim benefits and life insurance, dissolve their marriage and arrange their financial affairs. These things cannot be done without a death certificate.

At the moment, there are two kinds of legal processes: Leave to Swear Death and Presumption of Death. In general, it takes a minimum of seven years for a missing person to be presumed dead in the UK, although the legal processes are different depending on whether you live in England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland. Leave to Swear Death can, in some cases, be arranged before this seven year period.

You may find it helpful to obtain legal advice if you do need to go through this process. Assistance with legal issues may be obtained from the Citizen's Advice Bureau or the Law Society as outlined previously.

### **What to do when the missing person is located or found**

The majority of missing people return or are found within 48 hours, with only around 1% still missing after a year. If your friend or relative returns after you have reported them missing to the police, you must contact the police to let them know. When the missing person has returned or has been located, the police will need to establish that they are safe and well. The police may wish to see the person who was missing, to confirm this.

Do not forget to let other friends or volunteers who have helped with the search know that the missing person has been located. Also ensure that any charities that you have contacted are made aware.

People do not usually go missing without a reason. After the person is found or returns home, it is important to find out the reasons for their disappearance. If the issues that caused the disappearance are not addressed, there is a possibility that the person may go missing again. It may be helpful for you to discuss this with them or get them to discuss this with a friend or someone else they feel comfortable talking to.

In some circumstances, the police, Social Services or another organisation, such as a local charity, may wish to carry out a 'Return from Missing' interview with the returned/found person. The aim is to discuss why the person went missing and to help identify and address any problems or concerns that person may have.

If no 'Return from Missing' interview is conducted, it might be helpful for the person to speak to a charity or their GP to discuss any issues they may have and to access any support systems or services which they may find helpful.

Sometimes, adults who go missing voluntarily may, once found, wish for their location to remain secret. This is their right and in these circumstances, the police are legally obliged to respect their wishes. You will be told this if this is the case. The police will, however, ensure that they pass on any information that they are able to.

### **Support and advice can be sought from organisations such as:**

#### **Samaritans**

08457 90 90 90  
jo@samaritans.org  
www.samaritans.org

#### **The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)**

01455 883 300  
bacp@bacp.co.uk  
www.itsgoodtotalk.org.uk

For additional copies, to enquire about the content of this document or request the information in an alternative format, please contact the UK Missing Persons Bureau on **0845 000 5481** or email **missingpersons bureau@npia.pnn.police.uk**

The information in this guide is not definitive and should be utilised in conjunction with police guidance and independent legal advice.

## Has someone you know gone missing? Organisations that provide help and support

Factsheet 4

**It is believed that around 200,000 people go missing every year in the UK. Although most missing people are located within two days, their disappearance can be traumatic for both their family and their friends.**

As many as 2,000 people each year may remain missing for as long as a year, which can be very distressing for their families and friends left behind. It is normal to experience a range of emotional responses when missing a loved one. This may include feelings of anxiety, fear, anger, guilt, confusion, depression, helplessness, isolation, panic attacks, numbness and lack of motivation.

It is important to take care of yourself and your family. Do not be afraid to ask others for help and support where possible. You can assist the police investigation, cope better and be there to support the missing person when they return or are located, if you take care of yourself.

### Charities and organisations

A number of charities and organisations exist who may be able to provide you with support, advice and assistance:

#### Missing People

The charity Missing People provides support, advice and practical help for the families of missing people across the UK. It has a 24 hour telephone helpline for around-the-clock emotional support for the duration of a loved one's disappearance. The charity also runs several helplines for both missing adults and children to contact if they need assistance. Missing People also has a website listing details of people who have been reported

missing in the UK, both adults and children. Missing People is the largest charity working in this area.

Telephone: **0500 700 700**  
Runaway Helpline: **0808 800 7070**  
(children)  
Message Home: **0800 700 740** (adults)  
Email: **info@missingpeople.org.uk**  
Website: **www.missingpeople.org.uk**

#### Forever Searching

The charity Forever Searching provides support for families. Forever Searching can be contacted by sending a message via a form on its website.

Website: **www.foreversearching.com**

#### Reunite

Reunite is the leading UK charity specialising in international parental child abduction. It provides advice and support to anyone affected by child abduction or those who fear their child may be abducted. More information on this charity and their services can be found on their website.

Telephone: **0116 2555 345**  
Advice line: **0116 2556 234**  
Email: **reunite@dircon.co.uk**  
Website: **www.reunite.org**

## Missing Abroad

Missing Abroad provides advice and support for the families of children or adults missing overseas. Missing Abroad may also be able to provide practical assistance and help to individuals missing and stranded abroad. Missing Abroad is run by the Lucie Blackman Trust.

Telephone: **0207 047 5060**  
Freephone: **0800 098 8485** (for sightings and intelligence)  
Email: **operations@missingabroad.org**  
Website: **www.missingabroad.org**

## Samaritans

Samaritans provides confidential non-judgemental emotional support, 24 hours a day. Services are offered by telephone, email, letter and face-to-face in most of its branches.

Telephone: **08457 90 90 90**  
Email: **jo@samaritans.org**  
Website: **www.samaritans.org**

## Children and Families Across Borders (CFAB)

Children and Families Across Borders (CFAB) assists people who have been separated from family members as a result of divorce, migration, seeking asylum, trafficking and abduction. It also supports people for whom there are protection concerns, including children and vulnerable adults who may have been abducted or trafficked. CFAB assists in cases where children are separated from one or both parents. CFAB aims to reunite children with their families and assist children and adults to re-establish and maintain contact with parents and family members.

Telephone: **0207 735 8941**  
Email: **info@dfab.uk.net**  
Website: **www.cfab.uk.net**

## Parents and Abducted Children Together (PACT)

PACT is an international non-profit organisation that aims to increase awareness of parental child abduction. It is influential in the areas of policy making and research, through its lobbying to raise awareness and advocate solutions.

Information and resources relating to parental Abduction are available on their website.

Telephone: **0800 731 1845**  
Email: **support@pact-online.org**  
Website: **www.pact-online.org**

## Salvation Army

The Salvation Army provide a service for tracing adult relatives with whom contact has been lost (this does not include adoptees or under-16s).

Telephone: **0207 367 4747**  
(Mon - Fri 8:15am to 3:15pm)  
Website: **www.salvationarmy.org.uk/familytracing**

## Karma Nirvana

Karma Nirvana is a charity that supports victims and survivors of forced marriage and honour-based abuse. Karma Nirvana operates nationally across the UK and can be contacted via its Honour Network helpline. More details are available on their website.

Honour Network Helpline: **0800 5999 247**  
Website: **www.karmanirvana.org.uk**

## British Red Cross

The British Red Cross can assist with tracing relatives separated by war and disasters and provides a service to exchange messages.

Telephone: **0207 235 5454**  
Email: **itms2@redcross.org.uk**  
Website: **www.redcross.org.uk/trace**

## Missing-You.net

Missing-You.net is a free and instant on-line messaging service which allows users to contact missing persons, old friends and distant relatives.

Website: **www.missing-you.net**

## Missing Wales

Missing Wales is a charity dedicated to helping and tracing missing people from Wales and supporting their families. It provides a 24 hour free phone helpline. Its aim is to support, advise and listen to any person who has gone missing and wishes to either contact them to pass on a simple safe and well message home or to reunite them with their family.

Telephone: **0800 012 1217**  
Email: **janet@missingwales.co.uk**  
Website: **www.missingwales.co.uk**

## Childline

Childline is a counselling service for children and young people. Its' helpline may be a source of support for a child who is missing or has run away from home.

Telephone: **0800 11 11**  
Website: **www.childline.org.uk**

## SAFE@LAST

SAFE@LAST provides services (including a 24hr helpline) to young people who have run away, are thinking of running away or who have been made to leave the place they usually live. This charity works closely with police to return missing young people home if it is safe to do so. In some areas of the country, it provides emergency accommodation for young people who have run away or been made to leave. It also provides information on the dangers and risks of running away from home.

Telephone: **0800 335 SAFE or 01909 566977**  
Website: **www.safeatlast.org.uk**

## Safe and Sound Derby

A specialist organisation which seeks to reach out to children and young people who are being, or at risk of being, sexually exploited through criminal practices that threaten their physical and mental wellbeing (many of these children may be reported missing).

Telephone: **01332 362120**  
Email: **info@safeandsoundderby.co.uk**  
Website: **www.safeandsoundderby.co.uk**

## Rerun Dorset Runaways Service

Rerun Dorset Runaways Service provides advice, information and support to young people under 19 and their families, who are experiencing issues around running away or unplanned leaving home; with a view to reducing the incidence of persistent running away.

Telephone: **01258 475487**  
Email: **info@rerundorset.org**  
Website: **www.rerundorset.org**

## Jigsaw4u

Jigsaw4U provides care, advice, guidance, advocacy, support and counselling for children and young people who are experiencing loss and trauma. The work of this charity includes the counselling of young runaways.

Telephone: **0208 687 1384**  
Website: **www.jigsaw4u.org.uk**

## ECPAT

End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and the Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT). This charity focuses on the prevention of the exploitation and trafficking of children.

Telephone: **0207 233 9887**  
Email: **info@ecpat.org.uk**  
Website: **www.ecpat.org.uk**

## Railway Children

Railway Children exists to help vulnerable children, its objective is to provide relief to children and young people who are in conditions of need, hardship or distress and in particular, those living on the streets. Railway Children works with over 26 partner organisations with 117 projects worldwide across Africa, Asia and the UK. Railway Children helps thousands of street children every year from around the world.

Telephone: **01270 757596**  
Email: **enquiries@railwaychildren.org.uk**  
Website: **www.railwaychildren.org.uk**

## The Children's Society

The Children's Society provides help and understanding for children who are unable to find the support they need elsewhere. It is a large national charity with a network of projects. It also has an online runaways' resource pack that highlights the dangers of running away on its 'My Life' website.

Telephone: **0845 300 1128** or **0207 841 4400**  
Email: **supportercare@childrenssociety.org.uk**  
Website: **www.childrenssociety.org.uk**

## Barnardo's

Barnardo's works directly with children, young people and their families to support children and campaigns for better childcare policy. Barnardo's has hundreds of projects throughout the UK, including a Missing Service to support children who go missing. Barnardo's also report on missing-related issues. For example, it produced a 2010 report *Whose Child Now*, focusing on sexual exploitation and the links to children going missing and child trafficking in the UK.

Telephone: **0208 550 8822**  
Email: **May be emailed from a form on their website**  
Website: **www.barnardos.org.uk**

## National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)

The NSPCC aims to end cruelty to children in the UK. The NSPCC works directly with children in projects throughout the country. It campaigns to change the law to further protect children and provides the **Childline** helpline and the NSPCC helpline. The NSPCC also provides advice and help for adults, in order to protect children.

Telephone: **0207 825 2775**  
Email: **info@nspcc.org.uk**  
Website: **www.nspcc.org.uk**

## Local community support groups

Local community teams and support groups in your area may also be able to help. For example, there may be a group in your area which can offer general advice and assistance for those experiencing anxiety or depression. Information about local community services in your area can be found on your local county council website. Contact details for your local county council can be obtained from the DirectGov website:

[www.directgov.uk/en/DI1/Directories/Localcouncils/AtoZoflocalcouncils/DG\\_A-Z\\_LG](http://www.directgov.uk/en/DI1/Directories/Localcouncils/AtoZoflocalcouncils/DG_A-Z_LG)

Information and advice on local voluntary organisations and support groups can also be obtained from your local Citizen's Advice Bureau. You can find out where your nearest CAB is on their website:

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

## Additional information and coping strategies

### Someone is Missing – an Emotional Resource for Families of Missing People

*Someone is Missing* is a very useful online resource, developed by mental health and law-enforcement organisations in New South Wales, Australia. It includes information on the impact of having a missing family member or friend. There is also information on a range of practical coping strategies for people dealing with the trauma of missing someone. *Someone is Missing* can be found at:

<http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/40259/20100213-0001/www.missingpersons.org.au/index.html>

## Counselling or Therapy

Some people find that counselling or therapy can help them when a loved one is missing. If you think that it might be helpful to visit a counsellor or therapist in your area, you may wish to visit your GP to discuss this. Your GP will assess you and decide whether to refer you to a professional counsellor or therapist. In some cases, you may be given six sessions of counselling for free, but you may have to pay for all sessions, depending on where you live.

If you do not wish to go to your GP, you can contact the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), which will help you find a qualified counsellor, although you will have to fund this yourself. BACP has a client information helpdesk which assists people to find a suitable counsellor with whom they feel comfortable, in their particular area. The helpdesk staff can also discuss any queries or concerns that might arise while choosing a counsellor, or during the counselling process.

BACP Helpdesk: **01455 883316**

Website: **[www.bacp.co.uk](http://www.bacp.co.uk)**

Search for a therapist:

**[www.itsgoodtotalk.org.uk/therapists](http://www.itsgoodtotalk.org.uk/therapists)**

If you visit a counsellor or therapist, you may find it helpful to take the following document, which is produced by the Australian Federal Police, with you:

Supporting those who are left behind : A counselling framework to support families of missing people

Booklet:

**<http://www.missingpersons.gov.au/GetAssets.axd?FilePath=/Assets/Files/84ed048c-e9b9-45e4-b108-cc456002f7f7.pdf>**

Brochure:

**<http://www.missingpersons.gov.au/Assets/Files/de7c5359-7415-4643-a408-cabbaa769896.pdf>**

## Family Liaison Officers

In some cases, the police may allocate a Family Liaison Officer (FLO) to assist with the investigation. A FLO is more likely to be allocated in suspicious cases, where the police believe that the missing person may have come to harm. The FLO is primarily an investigator whose task is to gather information from the family and to enable a two-way conversation between the family and the police.

If you are allocated a FLO, there is a possibility that they may be withdrawn from the case after a period of time, even if the missing person has not been found.

Family Liaison Officers may be able to help you get in touch with a charity, such as Missing People, which can provide support and assistance during this difficult time.

## Police agencies and related organisations

A number of organisations also exist to assist the police with their investigations. You may be interested in their roles and remits, which are outlined briefly below:

### UK Missing Persons Bureau

The UK Missing Persons Bureau works with the police and related organisations to help find missing people. The Bureau acts as the centre for the sharing of information on missing and unidentified people. The Bureau assists with both recent and long term/historic missing person cases and the services provided are free to police forces. The Bureau also co-ordinates with Interpol and overseas agencies in order to assist with international missing person enquiries.

Telephone: **0845 000 5481**

Email:

**missingpersons bureau@npia.pnn.police.uk**

Website: **www.npia.police.uk/mpb**

## Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP)

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre delivers a multi-agency service dedicated to tackling the exploitation of children. Its work includes targeting sex offenders who groom children online, travelling sex offenders and identifying victims and perpetrators from images of child abuse. Some children may be reported missing after going to meet individuals they have met online and CEOP has responsibility for work relating to missing children.

Telephone: **0870 000 3344**

Email via contact form at:

**www.ceop.police.uk/contact-Us/Contact-form**

Website: **www.ceop.gov.uk**

## Interpol

Some missing person cases require international co-ordination or assistance, for example if a person goes missing while abroad or at sea. If there is reason to believe that a missing person is overseas, the police will co-ordinate with Interpol to issue a Yellow Notice, which will advise other countries that the person is missing and this may help locate them. The UK police does not have the automatic right to go and investigate on foreign soil when someone goes missing overseas.

In some cases, Interpol can assist the UK police by requesting that enquiries are made by the appropriate police force in the country in which the person has gone missing.

Some information is available on the Interpol website:

Website:

**www.interpol.int/Public/Children/missing/default.asp**

## Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)

The FCO can provide advice and assistance to families and friends of people believed to be missing abroad. More information on the role of the FCO may be found in the factsheet *What to do when someone goes missing abroad*, available at

[www.npia.police.uk/mpb](http://www.npia.police.uk/mpb)

Telephone: **0207 008 1500**

Website:

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/when-things-go-wrong/missing>

## FCO International Child Abduction Section

The FCO International Child Abduction Section assists British and Dual British nationals affected by parental child abduction or residence and contact disputes.

Telephone: **0207 008 0878**

Out of Hours: **0207 7008 1500**

Website:

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/when-things-go-wrong/child-abduction>

## FCO Forced Marriage Unit

If you are worried that someone may be missing because they have been forced into marriage, the FCO Forced Marriage Unit can provide confidential advice and assistance to:

- Those who have been forced into marriage
- Those at risk of being forced into marriage
- People worried about friends or relatives who may have been forced into marriage

Telephone: **0207 008 0151**

Email: [fmf@fco.gov.uk](mailto:fmf@fco.gov.uk)

Website:

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/when-things-go-wrong/forced-marriage>

## International Child Abduction and Contact Unit (ICACU)

The International Child Abduction and Contact Unit (ICACU) is the Central Authority in England and Wales for the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. The ICACU is based within the Office of the Official Solicitor and Public Trustee. The ICACU is open Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm and can provide information and advice relating to international child abduction.

Telephone: **0207 911 7127**

Email: [enquiries@offsol.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@offsol.gsi.gov.uk)

Website:

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/guidance/protecting-the-vulnerable/official-solicitor/international-child-abduction-and-contact-unit/index.htm>

For additional copies, to enquire about the content of this document or request the information in an alternative format, please contact the UK Missing Persons Bureau on **0845 000 5481** or email: [missingpersons bureau@npia.pnn.police.uk](mailto:missingpersons bureau@npia.pnn.police.uk)

The information in this guide is not definitive and should be utilised in conjunction with police guidance and independent legal advice.

## Has someone you know gone missing? Information on the police investigation

Factsheet 5

**After you have reported someone missing, you may wish to know more about how the police run a missing person investigation. Although actual procedures to deal with missing person cases may vary between police forces across the UK, the information provided below should give you a general idea of what to expect.**

### **Information about missing person investigations**

The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) definition of a missing person is “anyone whose whereabouts is unknown, whatever their circumstances of disappearance. They will be considered missing until located and their well-being or otherwise established”.

The priority for the police is to safeguard vulnerable people, locate people who are missing and ensure that they are safe and well. Once a police officer has taken a report from you about the missing person, they will record them as missing on police systems. They will then use the information and evidence they collect (including the information that you provide) during their initial enquiries to conduct a risk assessment.

The risk assessment provides an indication of the risk of harm to the person who is reported missing. If you believe that the person who is missing is at risk of harm, it is important that you tell the police and provide details of this. The police may gather information from other people who know the missing person, in addition to speaking to you and other family members.

During the risk assessment, the police will take into account factors like the person’s age,

the circumstances of their disappearance, whether the disappearance is out of character and whether the person needs essential medication or treatment, among other considerations.

Officers may need to search the home address of the missing person to confirm that the person is not there and to establish if there is any information or clues within their home, which may assist with the search for them. This is standard procedure when someone is reported missing.

It will be helpful for you to be aware of this and be prepared for the police to enter your home and to investigate every possible scenario. This is likely to involve speaking to you to determine your whereabouts and your relationship with the missing person. Again, this is all normal procedure.

It is important that you tell the police the truth, even if it is uncomfortable, embarrassing or relates to illegal behaviour; the police need to know everything in order to investigate fully. Failing to tell the police all relevant information may impair their ability to find the missing person. The police will treat the information that you provide in confidence. However, if the information suggests that the person is a risk to themselves or others, or is engaging in illegal behaviour, the police may need to act on that information.

The police will consider all lines of enquiry which are appropriate and necessary in the circumstances. A person may be missing for one of the following reasons (these are not police categories):

- Lost – due to an accident, misadventure or a condition like dementia

- Unintentionally missing because they changed their plans or forgot to tell someone where they were going
- Unintentionally missing because they have become a victim of crime such as abduction or another serious offence
- Intentionally missing, perhaps due to personal reasons they may not have shared with anyone, or due to problems that they may be experiencing, such as arguments or relationship problems, financial troubles or medical issues like depression.

A person in any of these groups may be at risk of harm; having information to determine what may have happened helps the police to plan searches and develop their lines of enquiry. Police lines of enquiry may include:

- Searching the area where the person was last seen
- Checks on mobile phones and computers used by the missing person
- House to house enquiries
- Reviewing CCTV footage
- Specialist searches (for example using helicopters, divers or dogs), particularly for high risk cases
- Co-ordinating media coverage to raise awareness.

Should the missing person not be found following the initial lines of enquiry, then the investigation may be passed to a nominated officer within the police station who will deal with all further enquiries that can be carried out. This may be the officer on duty at the time, referred to as the Duty Officer.

In some circumstances, if the missing person is not considered to be at risk of harm, the police may wait for a period before taking further action. This is because most people who are reported missing return or are found quickly.

There will be circumstances where a person may be missing, but police involvement may not be required. If the person you are trying to trace is a relative that you have lost contact

with and there is no known risk to this person, the police will not normally investigate this kind of case. The police may ask you some questions to make sure that there are no identifiable risks and once satisfied, close the case and refer family members to appropriate tracing services. Advice can be obtained from the [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) website on how to trace lost relatives. Other organisations may be able to provide assistance, for example Missing People, the Salvation Army or internet tracing companies. There is a factsheet called *Looking for someone you have lost touch with* which you may find helpful, available to download at [www.npia.police.uk/mpb](http://www.npia.police.uk/mpb)

If a person is missing, but it appears that they may have entered the UK without appropriate authority, this may not be investigated by the police as a missing person case. The circumstances of the case, the risk to the person, their age and other factors will be taken into consideration by the police when managing this type of case.

The police may also seek your consent for publicity. Using the media to appeal for information can be very effective, but this needs to be done in co-ordination with the police investigation. The police may ask for photographs (preferably recent) of the missing person.

The level of police response will be informed by the risk assessment process completed by the police.

## **Forensic material**

As part of their investigation, the police may collect items and material that can provide forensic evidence, which will assist with their search and enquiries.

- Consider limiting access to the missing person's bedroom or home until the police have searched and collected evidence
- Remember that clothing, bedding and other personal items may hold important evidence and information for the police, so do not wash anything or clean their room. Do not touch their hairbrush or toothbrush (or other items used only by the missing person) and when police conduct a search, ensure that these items are highlighted to police, as they may wish to take them for the collection of DNA and fingerprints. This may be

important if the person remains missing for a long period.

In addition to DNA and fingerprints, other forensic material like dental records (if the missing person was registered with a dentist) may also be useful to the investigation. The police can also make sure that this forensic information is added to the UK Missing Persons DNA Database and UK Missing Persons Dental Record Database, which contains this kind of information. These databases can assist the police if they find an unidentified person or body that they think might be the person who you have reported missing.

If the police cannot get a DNA sample for the missing person, it may be helpful for them to obtain a DNA sample from you and/or other family members in order to assist with the DNA identification process in the future.

The police may also ask for details of the missing person's dentist and/or doctor in order to obtain their dental, medical and possibly hospital records; in some cases your permission may be sought to obtain these.

If you would like more information on DNA, please refer to the document *Identification of people: A Guide*, which can be obtained from the UK Missing Persons Bureau [www.npia.police.uk/mpb](http://www.npia.police.uk/mpb). It is worth remembering that DNA is only used to help identify the person and is not used for any other purposes. Also, once the missing person is found, the DNA profile is deleted from the Missing Persons database.

## Family Liaison Officers

In some cases, the police may allocate a Family Liaison Officer (FLO) to assist with the investigation. A FLO is more likely to be allocated in suspicious cases where the police believe that the missing person may have come to harm. If you are allocated a FLO, there is a possibility that they may be withdrawn from the case after a period of time, even if the missing person has not been found. Family Liaison Officers may also be able to help you get in touch with a charity, such as Missing People, which can provide support and assistance during this difficult time.

## Police guidance

There is guidance that the police use when investigating cases of people who have gone missing. The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) *2010 Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons* is the main document which guides the way that the police investigate missing person cases. Actual police force policy on missing persons may vary from force to force, but should reflect the ACPO guidance.

If you wish to understand more about the police investigation, you can access the ACPO police guidance document on investigating missing person cases and other related information, on the UK Missing Persons Bureau website [www.npia.police.uk/mpb](http://www.npia.police.uk/mpb).

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For additional copies, to enquire about the content of this document or to request the information in an alternative format, please contact the UK Missing Persons Bureau on **0845 000 5481** or email: **[missingpersons bureau@npia.pnn.police.uk](mailto:missingpersons bureau@npia.pnn.police.uk)**

The information in this guide is not definitive and should be utilised in conjunction with police guidance and independent legal advice.

If you require more information, other factsheets can be downloaded from the NPPIA website: **[www.npia.police.uk/mpb](http://www.npia.police.uk/mpb)**

## Has someone you know gone missing? What to do when someone goes missing abroad

Factsheet 6

**It can be a traumatic experience when someone goes missing and it may be especially hard to know what to do when someone goes missing abroad. Helpful information on how to report the person missing and how to access help is outlined below.**

### **Report the person missing**

If you have recently lost contact with a family member who is travelling overseas, the first thing to do is report the person as missing to the police.

#### **If you are in the UK**

If you are in the UK, you should report the person as missing to the UK police. Ideally this should be to the police force for the area in which the person normally lives, although if you report it to a different police force, they should pass the details on to the relevant force. Telephone numbers for the police can be found in the phone book or online at [www.police.uk/?view-force\\_sites](http://www.police.uk/?view-force_sites) – many police forces are starting to use the 101 non-emergency number, which can be used to report a missing person.

After the police take down the details of the missing person, they may inform Interpol, which can liaise with the relevant foreign police force, because the UK police does not have the automatic right to investigate on foreign soil when someone goes missing overseas. Interpol may then ask for enquiries to be made in the country in which the person was last seen. However, it is important to note that Interpol will normally only become involved if the missing person is believed to be at risk of harm.

If you suspect a relative or friend has gone missing abroad, you should contact the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) on **0207 008 1500** and ask for the Consular Directorate. You will need to provide them with details of the country the person is believed to have gone missing in, where they were last seen and where you last had contact with them. The FCO can only help in cases where regular contact has unexpectedly been lost. They cannot help if you wish to trace someone you lost contact with a long time ago. Advice and assistance can also be provided by the UK Missing Persons Bureau on **0845 000 5481**.

#### **If you are abroad**

If you are abroad, you should report the person as missing to the local police in the country you are in. Provide as much information as possible and the police will pass on the details to Interpol, so that the investigating team can co-ordinate with the UK authorities. Make a note of any reference numbers they give you. The local police force has jurisdiction and should make enquiries to help find the missing person.

If you are abroad, you should also telephone the UK police to report the person missing. You should report the person missing to the police force for the area where the person normally lives. The telephone numbers for UK police forces can be obtained from the website [www.police.uk/?view=force\\_sites](http://www.police.uk/?view=force_sites) or the police force's own website. When you report the person missing, provide as much information as possible, including any reference numbers given to you by the police in the country you are currently in. The UK police force may inform Interpol, which can liaise with the relevant foreign police force. Again, it is important to note that Interpol will normally

only be involved if the missing person is believed to be at risk of harm.

If you are overseas, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) may also be able to assist you. The best way to access help is to locate the nearest British Embassy and report the person missing to them. You can use the FCO website [www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/find-an-embassy](http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/find-an-embassy) to find a British Embassy near you. You can also contact the FCO in the UK **+44 (0)207 008 1500** and ask for the Consular Directorate. You will also need to provide them with details of the country the person is believed to have gone missing in, where they were last seen and when you last had contact with them. Advice and assistance can also be provided by the UK Missing Persons Bureau **+44 (0)845 000 5481**

If you are in Europe and your child has gone missing, you should still contact the local police, the UK police and the FCO. Additionally, you can also call the **116 000** hotline number which has been created as a helpline in case a child goes missing.

The 116 000 phone number provides a way for parents to immediately get in contact with an organisation which can support them and provide assistance if their child has gone missing. **Remember that you still need to report your child missing to the police.** The 116 000 number will be answered by a charity in the country you are calling from, which deals with missing children. The charity should be able to provide information and assistance and put you in contact with local authorities. The 116 000 number can also be used to take sighting reports and other information from members of the public, which can then be passed on to the relevant police force.

The 116 000 number is currently operating in the following countries: Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and the UK.

## Information you should provide

When reporting a person missing abroad, you should try to provide as much information as possible about the missing person, such as:

- Name, date and place of birth

- The time and place that last contact was made
- Their travel itinerary and where you think they may be
- Mobile phone number and/or email address
- Their passport details
- The name of the company they have travel insurance with and any other details of their travel insurance policy that you may have
- A recent photograph.

If your friend or relative uses an internet site which they regularly update with details of where they are and perhaps who they are with, it is important that this information is also provided to the police and the FCO. For example, this might be an online travel blog, a personal website, a social networking site or a photo site, such as Flickr. Some of these sites may include geocoded or geotagged photographs uploaded by the missing person, which might include location information that may be of use to the investigation.

## What the police can do to help

Please be aware that responsibility for conducting searches overseas rests with the local police force in the country where the person has gone missing.

The UK police may assist with enquiries, but it is rare for them to become actively involved in the case. This is because they do not have the legal authority to carry out an investigation outside the UK and they can only do so with the permission of the country involved.

However, in some cases, the UK police can send requests via Interpol to the police force in the country where the person has gone missing, asking for enquiries to be made.

In some circumstances, the UK police may be granted permission to travel to the country where the person has gone missing, but this is rare and depends on permission being granted by that country. Even if a UK police force is given permission to travel to the country, they still might not be given permission to actively carry out any enquiries.

Sometimes, the police in the UK may be able to carry out some helpful enquiries in the UK to assist the search for you missing loved one. For example, checking financial records and collecting forensic material, such as DNA or fingerprints.

### **Financial records**

In some cases, the missing person's UK bank or building society may be able to advise the police when and where their account was last accessed. The bank may require an official police request from a UK police force before they agree to provide this information. In some cases, it may be necessary for the police in the country where the person has gone missing to place this request via Interpol.

### **Forensic material**

DNA samples and other forensic material like fingerprints and dental records may be useful to the investigation and may be collected by the police. You may wish to identify a personal item belonging to the missing person to give to the police. A toothbrush, hairbrush or razor could provide a DNA profile, as long as this was only used by the missing person. In some cases, it may be helpful for a relative to provide a sample. There is a UK Missing Persons DNA Database which contains profiles for individuals who have gone missing and for unidentified persons, bodies and body parts. There is also a DNA database maintained by Interpol in Lyon, France, to collect and compare DNA across international borders for Interpol's member countries. In some cases it may be relevant for the missing person's DNA to be checked against this. However, the Interpol database does not hold a large number of profiles and due to differences in DNA collection and sampling in different countries, it may not always be appropriate to check DNA against the Interpol database.

### **What the Foreign and Commonwealth Office can do to help**

The FCO can help in cases where regular contact has been unexpectedly lost. The FCO cannot help if you are trying to trace someone who you lost contact with a long time ago. The FCO may be able to:

- Check their records to see if the missing person has come to their attention (although the Data Protection Act 1998 may prevent them from releasing information without the person's consent)
- Liaise with the local authorities; they will keep you informed of their progress
- Pass on to the appropriate UK authorities any requests from host governments for help in mounting a search, rescue and recovery operation
- Provide you with details of any local organisations specialising in tracing missing persons
- Provide contact details for local private detectives. However, they cannot guarantee the professional capability of any person or company
- Appoint a caseworker in London with whom you can liaise
- Embassy staff can arrange to meet you if you are already abroad or if you decide to travel abroad to search yourself
- Arrange press or TV appeals in the relevant country
- Provide information on local printing companies, should you wish to initiate a poster and leaflet campaign. They can advise you on suitable poster locations.

### **What the FCO cannot do**

- Conduct physical searches on your behalf
- Provide financial assistance for rescue operations of people in remote areas
- Pay for a body to be returned to the UK
- Control media coverage of the case.

Information to help you locate your nearest British Embassy if you are overseas can be found at [www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/find-an-embassy](http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/find-an-embassy)

Contact details for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO):

Telephone: **0207 008 1500**  
Website: **www.fco.gov.uk**

## What you can do

Consider the following when trying to trace a person believed to be missing abroad:

- When and why were you expecting contact from them?
- Was there anything in their last communication with you that might suggest where they are now or why they might not have been in touch?
- Was there anything posted on their online social networking, blogging or information sharing websites that might suggest where they are now and/or who they may recently have been with?
- You may wish to contact the family of any travelling companions or other people with whom the missing person might have been in contact with whilst abroad, to see if they have any helpful information
- In some countries, it may be possible to offer a reward for information. Consider the implications of this and contact an organisation that has experience of tracing missing persons for advice, such as Missing Abroad
- Consider what you would be able to achieve by travelling to the country yourself. Local authorities may be reluctant to pass on information.

## Other organisations

There are other organisations which may be able to provide you with assistance:

### Missing Abroad

Missing Abroad is a charity which provides support and advice to those whose family or friends are missing overseas. More information can be obtained from their website or by contacting them directly.

Telephone: **0207 047 5060**  
Email: **operations@missingabroad.org**  
Website: **www.missingabroad.org**

### FCO International Child Abduction Section

The FCO's International Child Abduction Section assists British and Dual British nationals affected by parental child abduction or residence and contact disputes.

Telephone: **0207 008 0878**  
Out of hours: **0207 008 1500**  
Website: **www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/when-things-go-wrong/child-abduction**

### International Child Abduction and Contact Unit (ICACU)

The International Child Abduction and Contact Unit is the Central Authority in England and Wales for the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. The ICACU is based within the Office of the Official Solicitor and Public Trustee. They may be able to help if your child has been taken abroad without your consent and kept overseas against your wishes.

Telephone: **0207 911 7127**  
Email: **enquiries@offsol.gsi.gov.uk**  
Website: **http://www.justice.gov.uk/guidance/protecting-the-vulnerable/official-solicitor/international-child-abduction-and-contact-unit/index.htm**

## FCO Forced Marriage Unit

If you are worried that someone may have stopped contact or be missing due to having been forced into marriage, the FCO Forced Marriage Unit can provide confidential advice and assistance to:

- Those who have been forced into marriage
- Those at risk of being forced into marriage
- People worried about friends or relatives who may have been forced into marriage.

More information can be accessed via the FCO FMU website.

Telephone: **0207 008 0151**

Email: **fmu@fco.gov.uk**

Website:

**<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/when-things-go-wrong/forced-marriage>**

## Children and Families Across Borders (CFAB)

Children and Families Across Borders (CFAB) assists people who have been separated from family members as a result of divorce, migration, seeking asylum, trafficking and abduction. It also supports people for whom there are protection concerns, including children and vulnerable adults who may have been abducted or trafficked. CFAB assists in cases where children are separated from one or both parents, CFAB aims to reunite children with their families and assist children and adults to re-establish and maintain contact with parents and family members.

Telephone: **0207 735 8941**  
(free advice and information hotline)

Email: **info@cfab.uk.net**

Website: **www.cfab.uk.net**

## UK Missing Persons Bureau

The Missing Persons Bureau works alongside the police and related organisations to help find missing people.

Telephone: **0845 000 5481**

Email:

**missingpersons bureau@npia.pnn.police.uk**

Website: **www.npia.police.uk/mpb**

The following organisations may be able to assist people who have lost contact with a relative at home or abroad, over a long period of time. They may not be able to help if you have recently lost contact with a family member who is travelling overseas, however.

## The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army provides a service for tracing adult relatives with whom contact has been lost. Its Family Tracing Service operates in 100 countries throughout the world.

Telephone: **0207 367 4747**  
(Mon-Fri 8:15am to 3:15pm)

Website:

**www.salvationarmy.org.uk/familytracing**

## British Red Cross

It's international family tracing and message exchange services are aimed at restoring and maintaining family links between close relatives who have been separated as a result of armed conflict, natural or other disasters.

Telephone: **0207 235 5454**

Email: **itms2@redcross.org.uk**

Website: **www.redcross.org.uk/trace**

## General Register Office

The Overseas Department of the General Register Office holds records of births, marriages and deaths of British Citizens overseas that have been registered with British authorities.

Telephone: **0845 603 7788**

Email: **certificate.services@ips.gsi.gov.uk**

Website:

**<https://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates/faqs-overseas.asp>**

You may also find the factsheet *Organisations that provide help and support* useful. This, and other factsheets, can be downloaded from the UK Missing Persons Bureau website [www.npia.police.uk/mpb](http://www.npia.police.uk/mpb)

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For additional copies, to enquire about the content of this document or request the information in an alternative format, call **0845 000 5481** or email **[missingpersons bureau@npia.pnn.police.uk](mailto:missingpersons bureau@npia.pnn.police.uk)**

The information contained in this document is not definitive and should be utilised in conjunction with police guidance and independent legal advice.

If you require more information, other factsheets can be downloaded from the NPIA website **[www.npia.police.uk/mpb](http://www.npia.police.uk/mpb)**

## Has someone you know gone missing? How publicity can help

Factsheet 7

**After you have reported someone missing, the police may seek your consent for publicity. Raising awareness of your missing friend or family member may help to find them. You can also raise awareness yourself through posters and social networking (for example, Facebook), but this should be done in co-ordination with the police.**

In most cases, raising awareness that your friend or family member is missing will assist the search. In rare cases, police may advise against publicity and if so, they will tell you the reasons for doing this.

If the police do advise using the media to help locate your missing loved one, they may ask for photographs (preferably recent) of the missing person which could be released to the media with your permission. Carefully consider any requests they make for permission to use details, photos or videos of the missing person. If the police advise releasing material, it will usually be because this is a good way to find people. If you can't find a recent photo, make sure that you advise the police of the year that the photo was taken and what physical differences there are in the person's current appearance, if any.

It will also be helpful for you to provide a full physical description of the missing person, including the clothes and jewellery they were wearing (if known). Details of any scars, tattoos, birth marks or accents are also important to mention.

### **Be sure to co-ordinate with the police**

Always consult with the police officer in charge of the case before launching any of your own publicity activity. The police have communications professionals who will be able

to help co-ordinate publicity and offer you practical advice. This will help to make sure that any activity you carry out has the greatest chance of success and fits in with what the police are doing.

You should also discuss what information about the missing person should and should not be given to the media with the police officer investigating the case, as this may affect the investigation.

### **Types of publicity**

Generally, a number of steps can be taken to obtain publicity and these include:

#### **Posters**

Creating and putting up a Missing Person poster can be an effective way to raise awareness locally that your loved one is missing. Posters can be put up:

- In the area they went missing
- Near their home address
- Near their work or school
- Places that the missing person is known to visit, for example, their gym
- Anywhere else you think would be appropriate. For example, it may help to put posters up in local churches, hospitals, libraries, shopping centres and any other likely locations where the missing person may have gone or may have been seen.

The poster should include a photograph, a physical description of the missing person – especially any unusual or distinct features such as tattoos or braces – when and where they went missing, and anything else which may

assist members of the public to recognise them.

When creating a poster, please do not include your personal contact details, as this could put you in a vulnerable situation. Instead, include the relevant telephone number for the investigating police force, which you can ask the officer in charge of the investigation for. Alternatively, you can use the charity Missing People's phone number which people can call to report sightings of a missing person: 0500 700 700.

## **Internet publicity and social networking**

A website or social networking page can be created which includes the details of the missing person, to raise awareness that they are missing and to collect information. These sites allow information to be spread very quickly, particularly if that person may be at high risk. You may be able to create a site yourself, or ask a friend or family member to help you. Otherwise, a charity such as Missing People can provide advice on how to do this.

Charity websites which display details of people who are missing may also be able to add the details of your missing loved one to their website. The main UK charity which includes details of missing adults and children on their website, is Missing People.

If the person who is missing is a child, the police may be able to get their details added to the UK Missing Kids website. This means that the case will be publicised on the internet and you will also be able to download and print out posters from the website. If you would like the details of a missing child to be featured on the Missing Kids website, you should speak to the officer dealing with the investigation and advise them that you would like to have details of your child featured on the website. They will ask you to sign a consent form, which will also need to be countersigned by the police officer investigating the case and returned to the relevant police force, who will then add details to the site. CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection) and the UK Missing Persons Bureau can also assist the police with getting the details of a missing child featured on this website: [www.missingkids.co.uk](http://www.missingkids.co.uk)

## **Engagement with local media**

All police forces have a press office and the officer in charge of the missing person investigation will be able to work with them, where appropriate, to issue press releases and organise media events. For example, the police may be able to engage with local papers, radio and TV, provide them with photos and descriptions of the missing person and in some cases, organise media interviews with you or other family members.

Be aware that if the media do become interested in the case, they may approach other people for information about the missing person. They may also run the story in a different way to what you expect.

If you feel that you cannot handle the media yourself, ask a trusted family member or friend to act as a spokesperson. You should also bear in mind that the media sometimes have more news than they can use, so although you may have been interviewed or may have provided information and photographs for a news story, this does not guarantee that they will run the story.

Using the media to appeal for information can be very effective, but this should always be done in co-ordination with the police investigation.

## **Help with publicity from other organisations**

Some advice and assistance with publicity may also be obtained from charitable organisations such as Missing People and Forever Searching, which provide advice and support for families of missing persons. You should ensure that you discuss this with the police before you request publicity via a charitable organisation and ensure that only the details which the police are happy to be shared with the public are included in publicity material.

Helpful organisations include:

### **Missing People**

Missing People provide support and services for family and friends of missing persons. The charity has a website listing details of both adults and children who have been reported missing in the UK and is the largest charity working in this area.

Telephone: **0500 700 700**  
Email: **info@missingpeople.org.uk**  
Website: **www.missingpeople.org.uk**

### **Forever Searching**

Forever Searching provides support to families of missing children and may assist with publicity and raising awareness. The charity can be contacted by sending a message via a form on their website:

Website: **www.foreversearching.com**

### **Missing-You.net**

Missing-You.net is a free and instant online messaging service which allows users to contact missing persons, old friends and distant relatives.

Website: **www.missing-you.net**

### **Missing Abroad**

Missing Abroad provides advice and support for the families of children or adults missing overseas. The charity may also be able to provide practical assistance and help to individuals missing and stranded abroad. Missing Abroad is run by the Lucie Blackman trust.

Telephone: **0207 047 5060**  
Email: **operations@missingabroad.org**  
Website: **www.missingabroad.org**

Details of more charities and organisations that can help with publicity are available on Factsheet 4 in this series, *Organisations that provide help and support*, which can be downloaded from [www.npia.police.uk/mpb](http://www.npia.police.uk/mpb)

### **What to do when the missing person is located or returns**

If your friend or relative returns after you have reported them missing to the police, you must contact the police to let them know. The police can then check that they are safe and well, close the case and remove their details from the police websites and poster displays. If information has been released to the media, the police will advise them that personal details should no longer be used or archived.

Do not forget to let other friends or volunteers who have helped with the search know that the missing person has been located. Also ensure that any charities you have contacted are made aware so that they can remove details from their websites.

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For additional copies, to enquire about the content of this document or to request the information in an alternative format, please contact the UK Missing Persons Bureau on **0845 000 5481** or email: **missingpersons bureau@npia.pnn.police.uk**

The information in this guide is not definitive and should be utilised in conjunction with police guidance and independent legal advice.

For more information, including other factsheets, please go to the NPIA website **www.npia.police.uk/mpb**

## Has someone you know gone missing? International Parental Child Abduction

Factsheet 8

**Relationship breakdowns sometimes lead to a child being taken abroad by one of their parents without the other parent's consent. Parental child abduction and residence disputes can cause distress to everyone involved. The legal position can also be complicated, depending on what has happened and who has legal custody. In certain circumstances, it may actually be a criminal offence if your partner or ex-partner has taken your child abroad without your consent.**

Generally, child abduction is when a person takes or sends a child (under 16 years old) out of the UK without the appropriate consent. Appropriate consent is normally the permission of those with parental responsibility or the permission of the court (if there is a Court Order in place, for example).

**This is still the case, even if the person who has taken the child out of the UK is one of their parents.**

However, there are a few exceptions. For example, a mother can take a child out of the UK without the father's permission if the father does not have parental responsibility. As another example, a child may be taken outside the UK without the consent of the other parent if they are in possession of a certain type of Court Order. With some types of court order, a child may be taken on holiday for up to a month, without the permission of the other parent or the court, if the parent has a Residence Order.

### Parental Responsibility

The mother of a child obtains parental responsibility automatically. A father, who is married to the mother at the time of the birth,

also automatically obtains parental responsibility. A father who is unmarried at the time of the birth does not obtain parental responsibility unless his name was recorded on the birth certificate at the time of registration (after 2003). Prior to 2003, an unmarried father did not obtain parental responsibility unless by way of a Parental Responsibility Order or a Parental Responsibility Agreement. Since the introduction of the Adoption and Children Act 2002, unmarried fathers and step-parents can now obtain parental responsibility by way of consent or a Court Order. The Civil Partnership Act 2005 allows the childless partner (where same sex partners have children) to obtain parental responsibility in the same way as step-parents and unmarried fathers.

### Parental Abduction

There are three broad categories of child abduction:

- Abduction – where a child is taken overseas without the other parent's consent; this may be a criminal offence under UK law, under section 1 of the Child Abduction Act 1984, punishable by up to seven years imprisonment
- Wrongful retention – where a child has been retained in a foreign country following an overseas trip; this may also be a criminal offence under UK law
- Threat of abduction – where there is a risk that a child may be taken overseas.

If you think that your child has been taken overseas without your consent or if you fear that your child will be abducted, it is important that you take immediate action.

## What to do if you believe your child has been abducted

### Contact the police immediately

Provide the police with as much information as you can. Try to provide information on the following:

- The full name of your child, their description and nationality – provide a photograph
- Why you think your child may have been abducted
- The day, date, time and location of the abduction
- The name and details of the person they were with when they were abducted
- Where you think your child may be now and where you think they may be taken
- Details of the person you think may have taken your child or may be with your child now, including their full name, description and nationality if you know this information
- What links the person who has taken your child has to other places in the UK or other countries
- Details of any vehicle owned or used by the person you think may have taken your child
- Details of any previous threats to take your child and any previous abductions or attempted abductions
- Whether your child has their own passport and whether it is a UK or foreign passport. Provide the passport number, date and place of issue, if known
- Whether the child has dual nationality (so has more than one passport)
- What the situation is in relation to custody of your child, including any custody proceedings or Court Orders and your current marital status
- Copies of your child's birth certificate and any other agreements or Court Orders which apply to the child

- Any other information you think might help the police find your child.

If it is not too late, the police may be able to take some measures to stop your child from being taken out of the country. If your child has already been taken outside the UK, the police may be able to work with Interpol and police forces in other countries to find your child.

### Contact Reunite

If your child has been abducted by their other parent, you should also contact Reunite. This charity specialises in providing help, advice and support to people affected by international parental child abduction. You can speak to someone from Reunite by contacting their advice line on **01162 556 234** or by email at **reunite@dircon.co.uk**. There is a lot of helpful information on their website [www.reunite.org](http://www.reunite.org), including frequently asked questions about international parental child abduction. The website has a library of documents which you may find useful, as well as links to groups and organisations from a number of different countries that may be able to assist you. Reunite also offer a specialist mediation service.

### Contact a lawyer

In some cases it may be necessary to get a High Court Order to prevent your child from being taken out of the country. You should consult a suitably qualified lawyer as soon as possible. The charity Reunite will be able to provide you with advice and, if necessary, details of qualified lawyers.

### Contact the Child Abduction Section at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)

The FCO can provide you with more information about what you can do if you think your child has been abducted. You can contact them on **020 7008 0878** (or out of office hours on **020 7008 1500**). More information can be obtained from the FCO website and their useful guide on parental child abduction.

### **FCO website:**

[www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/when-things-go-wrong/child-abduction](http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/when-things-go-wrong/child-abduction)

### **FCO International Parental Child Abduction Guide:**

[www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/2855621/3069110](http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/2855621/3069110)

### **Get information from the International Child Abduction and Contact Unit (ICACU)**

More information on parental child abduction can also be obtained from the ICACU. The ICACU website contains a lot of useful information, including details of what action to take when a child is abducted and a child abduction checklist.

You can contact the ICACU on **020 7911 7045/7047** or email them **[enquiries@offsol.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@offsol.gsi.gov.uk)**

### **Action to take when a child is abducted**

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/guidance/protecting-the-vulnerable/official-solicitor/international-child-abduction-and-contact-unit/action-to-take.htm>

### **Child Abduction Checklist**

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/guidance/protecting-the-vulnerable/official-solicitor/international-child-abduction-and-contact-unit/checklist.htm>

### **What to do if you think your child is at risk of being abducted**

#### **Contact the police**

If you think that your child is at risk of being abducted by your partner or ex-partner, you should contact the police and explain why. Tell the police about any threats made or any previous attempts to abduct your child. In some circumstances, the police may be able to assist you, for example by taking certain measures to ensure that the child is not taken out of the country. The police would need to

be assured that there is a real and imminent risk of your child being abducted.

#### **Contact Reunite**

Reunite can provide you with advice and information on what to do if you think that your child is at risk of being abducted. You can speak to someone from Reunite by contacting their advice line on **01162 556 234** or contact them by email

**[reunite@dircon.co.uk](mailto:reunite@dircon.co.uk)**. There is a lot of useful information on their website at [www.reunite.org](http://www.reunite.org), including guides on what to do to prevent your child from being abducted.

#### **Contact a lawyer**

If you are not sure about the legal position in relation to your child and think that you might need to get a custody order or preventative court order to stop your child being taken out of the country, you should contact a suitably qualified family lawyer. The charity Reunite will be able to provide you with advice and details of qualified lawyers if required.

#### **Contact the Identity and Passport Service**

In some cases, the UK Identity and Passport Service (IPS) may be able to prevent your partner or ex-partner obtaining a passport for your child without your consent. Normally, the IPS will issue a passport for a child if the application is made by either parent, or a person with parental responsibility for that child. If you have (or can get) a court order that forbids the issue of a passport without your consent, or the consent of the court, you should let the IPS know. The IPS will then not issue a passport for your child for anyone but you.

For more details or to ask the IPS not to issue a passport for your child, contact the IPS Advice Line on **0300 222 0000** or find out more:

**[www.direct.gov.uk/en/TravelAndTransport/Passports/Applyingforaneworrenewedchildpassport/index.htm](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/TravelAndTransport/Passports/Applyingforaneworrenewedchildpassport/index.htm)**

If the other parent of your child is not British, they may be able to get a passport for the child from their own country. You can write or get your lawyer to write to the relevant Embassy, High Commission or Consulate, asking them not to issue a passport for your

child, but they do not have to follow your instructions. More information on this can be obtained from Reunite or the FCO as above.

### **Contact the Child Abduction Section at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

The FCO may be able to provide you with more information about what you can do. You can contact them on **020 7008 0878** or outside of office hours on **020 7008 1500**. More information and a useful guide on Parental Child Abduction, can be obtained from their website:

#### **FCO website:**

[www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/when-things-go-wrong/child-abduction](http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/when-things-go-wrong/child-abduction)

#### **FCO International Parental Child Abduction Guide:**

[www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/2855621/3069110](http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/2855621/3069110)

### **Get Information from the International Child Abduction and Contact Unit**

The ICACU website contains a lot of useful information, including advice on child abduction law and preventing child abduction. You can contact the ICACU on **020 7911 7045/7047** or email **enquiries@offsol.gsi.gov.uk**

#### **Child abduction prevention**

[www.officialsolicitor.gov.uk/os/icacu\\_prevention.htm](http://www.officialsolicitor.gov.uk/os/icacu_prevention.htm)

#### **Child Abduction law**

[www.officialsolicitor.gov.uk/os/icacu\\_law.htm](http://www.officialsolicitor.gov.uk/os/icacu_law.htm)

### **Information on police notices and alerts**

If you think that your child may be taken outside the UK, tell the police why because

there are some measures that can be taken to prevent your child from being taken overseas..

### **Interpol Notice**

It might also be appropriate for an Interpol Yellow Notice to be circulated for the missing child. This is a notice that can be circulated to other countries to let them know that your child is missing and it may help with their location. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for a Red Notice to be circulated for the person who has abducted your child. Interpol also maintains a missing children database and details of a missing child can be added to this database at the request of the relevant country if a Yellow Notice has been circulated for the child.

### **Child Rescue Alert**

If you are concerned for the safety of your child, the police may be able to issue a Child Rescue Alert. CRA is a partnership between the police, the press and the public. The aim of a CRA is to locate an abducted child by using the media to promptly publish details about the child's disappearance to the public.

Certain criteria must be met before a CRA can be launched:

- The child is under the age of 18 and
- There is reasonable belief that the child has been kidnapped or abducted (including under the influence of a third party) and
- There is reasonable belief that the child is in imminent danger of serious harm or death and
- There is sufficient information available to enable the public to assist the police in locating the child.

Not all cases will result in a CRA being activated. The decision to launch a CRA is an operational one, made by the Senior Investigating Officer for the police force concerned. More information can be obtained from your local police force or the CRA website **[www.npia.police.uk/CRA](http://www.npia.police.uk/CRA)**

## The Hague Convention on child abduction

It is helpful to be aware of the *Hague Convention of 25 October 1980 on the International Aspects of Child Abduction* and how it might be able to help you. It is an agreement between certain countries to assist in the prompt return of children who have been abducted to another country.

The Convention provides a legal basis for you to try to get your child returned home. If your child has been taken to one of the countries which have signed up to the Convention, you can apply to your Central Authority to request assistance in getting your child returned to you. The International Child Abduction and Contact Unit (ICACU) is the Central Authority for England and Wales; in Scotland, the Central Authority is the International and Human Rights Branch of the Scottish Government; and in Northern Ireland, the Central Authority sits within the Northern Ireland Courts Service. The country where the child is thought to be must take the steps required by the Convention to help return your child.

If your child has been taken to one of the countries which have signed the Convention, it is important that you take action as quickly as possible. After a child has lived in a new home in a different country for some time, it may be harder to get them returned to you. This is because the courts may think that it is not in the child's best interests to move them again.

More information on the 1980 Hague Convention, including an up-to-date list of the countries which have signed up to it, can be found on the website for the Hague Conference on Private International Law.

### Hague Conference on Private International Law:

Website: [http://www.hcch.net/index\\_en.php](http://www.hcch.net/index_en.php)

### List of countries that have signed up to the Convention:

Website:  
[http://www.hcch.net/index\\_en.php?act=conventions.status&cid=24](http://www.hcch.net/index_en.php?act=conventions.status&cid=24)

### Wording of the 1980 Convention:

[http://www.hcch.net/index\\_en.php?act=conventions.text&cid=24](http://www.hcch.net/index_en.php?act=conventions.text&cid=24)

## Central Authority contact details

Contact the relevant Central Authority for where you and your child live:

### Central Authority for England and Wales

Telephone: **0207 911 7045/7047**

Email: [enquiries@offsol.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@offsol.gsi.gov.uk)

Website:

[www.officialsolicitor.gov.uk/os/icacu.htm](http://www.officialsolicitor.gov.uk/os/icacu.htm)

### Central Authority for Scotland

Telephone: **0131 244 4827**

Website: [www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)

### Central Authority for Northern Ireland

Telephone: **02890 328 594**

Website: [www.nics.gov.uk](http://www.nics.gov.uk)

### Central Authority for the Isle of Man

Telephone: **01624 685 452**

## Accessing more information and advice

Some of the organisations listed below may be able to assist if your child has been abducted by your spouse or partner and taken abroad, in addition to those mentioned already.

### Reunite

Reunite is the leading UK charity specialising in international parental child abduction. It provides advice and support to anyone affected by child abduction or those who fear their child may be abducted. Reunite can provide information on preventing child abduction and can send you a list of lawyers in the UK who specialise in child abduction cases. There is also a host of other information and resources on its' website. Reunite has an advice line and also offers an international

mediation service to help parents reach workable solutions.

Advice Line: **01162 556 234**

Website: [www.reunite.org](http://www.reunite.org)

### **Parents and Abducted Children Together (PACT)**

PACT works at a strategic level to raise awareness of parental child abduction and is influential in advocacy, policy making and research.

Telephone: **07506 448 116**

Email: [support@pactonline.org](mailto:support@pactonline.org)

Website: [www.pact-online.org](http://www.pact-online.org)

### **UK Missing Persons Bureau**

The UK Missing Persons Bureau works with the police and related organisations to help find missing people. The Bureau acts as the centre for the exchange of information on missing and unidentified people. The Bureau also coordinates with Interpol and overseas agencies in order to assist with international missing person enquiries.

Telephone: **0845 000 5481**

Email: [missingpersons bureau@npia.pnn.police.uk](mailto:missingpersons bureau@npia.pnn.police.uk)

Website: [www.npia.police.uk/mpb](http://www.npia.police.uk/mpb)

### **Child Exploitation and Online Protection centre (CEOP)**

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre provides a multi-agency service which is dedicated to tackling the exploitation of children. Its work includes targeting sex offenders who groom children online and travelling sex offenders, as well as identifying victims and those people responsible for making, circulating and using child abuse images. CEOP has responsibility for missing children cases where an operational response is required, such as the launch of a Child Rescue Alert.

Telephone: **0870 000 3344**

Email: Email via a contact form at: [www.ceop.police.uk/Contact-Us/Contact-form](http://www.ceop.police.uk/Contact-Us/Contact-form)

Website: [www.ceop.gov.uk](http://www.ceop.gov.uk)

### **Children and Families Across Borders (CFAB)**

CFAB assists people who have been separated from family members as a result of divorce, migration and abduction. CFAB assists in cases where children are separated from one or both parents, aiming to reunite children with their families.

Telephone: **0207 735 8941**

Email: [info@cfab.uk.net](mailto:info@cfab.uk.net)

Website: [www.cfab.uk.net](http://www.cfab.uk.net)

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The information in this guide is not definitive and should be utilised in conjunction with police guidance and independent legal advice.

More information, including other factsheets, is available from the NPIA website [www.npia.police.uk/mpb](http://www.npia.police.uk/mpb)

## Has someone you know gone missing? Looking for someone with whom you've lost touch

Factsheet 9

**If you have lost contact with someone over time and wish to get back in touch with them, information is provided below which may help with your search.**

If you are trying to trace someone who you have lost contact with, some useful information can be obtained using the internet or by contacting certain libraries or offices. Some charities also provide family tracing services that help people find family members that they have lost touch with. The details of some of the main sources of information which may assist you in your search are outlined below.

However, if you have recently and unexpectedly lost contact with someone, or you are concerned for someone's safety, you should report them as missing to the police.

### **Searching national records**

If you are searching for someone, you may find it helpful to look at the Voters Register, available at your local library. You can also use the internet, where there is a number of websites and sources of information which may help you to trace friends or relatives.

### **Checking electoral registers**

You can use the electoral register to look for someone if you know the area where they last lived. The electoral register lists the name and address of everyone registered to vote in the local area. To find out how to access an electoral register, contact the local council for that area.

Find a local electoral register online:

#### **The DirectGov website:**

[http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/InYourHome/SupportAtHome/DG\\_179004](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/InYourHome/SupportAtHome/DG_179004)

#### **or at the Electoral Commission website:**

[www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk)

A full set of electoral registers for the UK since 1947 is held by the British Library. You can visit the library, or arrange for a member of staff to search the registers for you.

Telephone: **0843 208 1144**

Email: **customer-services@bl.uk**

Website: **www.bl.uk**

However, it is worth bearing in mind that not everyone will be listed on the electoral register. If you cannot find the person you are looking for on the register, this could mean that they:

- Have not registered to vote or have opted out of being listed on the register that is available to the public
- Have moved to another area
- Have married and changed their name
- Are no longer alive.

If a person has opted out of the electoral register that is available to the public, you can view the full electoral register at the relevant council office for the area in which they live.

## Birth, marriage and death information

You may find it useful to search the birth, marriage and death records. The General Register Office (GRO) holds records for England and Wales, of all:

- Births
- Marriages
- Civil Partnerships
- Deaths
- Adoptions granted by a court.

To find out how to search for this information, including your local register office, visit the DirectGov website:

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Governmentcitizensandrights/Registeringlifeevents/Researchingfamilyhistory/index.htm>

You can order copies of birth, marriage and death certificates online, by post or telephone from the GRO. You can also contact the local register office where the event was registered. Certificates should include addresses which you can use to check the electoral roll for the area.

## Births, marriages and deaths that happened overseas

The Overseas Department of the GRO holds records of births, marriages and deaths of British citizens overseas that have been registered with British authorities. You can contact them to find out more or order copies of these documents.

Telephone: **0845 603 7788**

Email: [certificate.services@ips.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:certificate.services@ips.gsi.gov.uk)

Website:

<https://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates/faqs-overseas.asp>

## Searching wills

If you think that the person you are looking for may have passed away, you can search records of wills made in England and Wales kept at the Probate Registry in London. It may also be useful to check these records if you think that the person you are looking for died abroad or while on duty in the Armed Forces.

You can either go in person or request that a search is carried out on your behalf for a small fee. If you want to visit in person, you will need to make an appointment in advance. You can use a form called a PA1S to request a search.

For more information, please see the UK Government's Justice website:

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/guidance/courts-and-tribunals/courts/probate/family-history.htm>

You can download the form PA1S from this site.

## Searching for name changes

If you think that the person you are looking for may have changed their name, you may wish to search the name change records. Most name changes are done using the Deed Poll process, which involves using a solicitor to legally change all or part of a name. The only official records of Deed Polls are those that are registered or 'enrolled' with the Royal Courts of Justice. You can get information about name changes enrolled within the last five years by writing to the Royal Courts of Justice in London. Enrolled changes of name that are over five years old are held at the National Archives at Kew, London.

To contact the Royal Courts of Justice about Deed Poll information, use one of the following:

Telephone the Royal Courts of Justice on:  
**020 7947 6000**

Write to:

The Royal Courts of Justice  
Strand  
London  
WC2A 2LL

## Finding your birth or adoptive family

If you are looking for your birth or adoptive family, you can check your original birth registration record once you are 18 years old.

For more information, see:

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Governmentcitizensandrights/Registeringlifeevents/Birthandadoptionrecords/index.htm>

## Tracing natural parents for children who were adopted

A number of organisations such as NORCAP may be able to assist you if you were adopted and are trying to trace your natural parents. Individuals can leave details on the Contact Register, which enables parents and children to contact each other, but only if both are entered on to this register.

Adults Affected by Adoption – NORCAP:

[www.norcap.org.uk](http://www.norcap.org.uk)

## Tracing your family tree

There are a number of organisations involved in this field which may be able to assist and they can be found on the internet. Additionally, you may wish to view records at the National Archives at Kew, London.

National Archives:

[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk)

## Tracing services

You may also be able to use the family tracing services provided by the Salvation Army, the Red Cross or private companies. Charges may apply for the services provided by these organisations.

## The Salvation Army Family Tracing Service

The Salvation Army Family Tracing Service helps to find relatives who are over the age of 18, with whom contact has been lost. This does not include individuals who have been adopted. More details are available on its website, where you can submit a Family Tracing Request form. The Family Tracing Service operates in 100 countries, so it may

be able to help if you think that your relative may now be living abroad.

Telephone: **0207 367 4747**  
(Mon-Fri 8:15am – 3:15pm)

Website:  
[www.salvationarmy.org.uk/familytracing](http://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/familytracing)

## The Red Cross

The Red Cross runs a tracing service for relatives who have lost contact due to war or international disasters. It can assist with tracing relatives or provide a service to exchange messages. The Red Cross may also be able to help if you think your relative may be overseas. Further information is available on the Red Cross website.

Telephone: **0207 235 5454**

Email: [itms2@redcross.org.uk](mailto:itms2@redcross.org.uk)

Website: [www.redcross.org.uk/trace](http://www.redcross.org.uk/trace)

## Commercial tracing services

Many organisations and businesses offer to trace missing people for you. Some websites offer to carry out research for a fee, but you should check that the service is run by people who are experienced in this kind of investigation. Details on organisations which trace people can be found by searching on the internet.

## Need more information?

Further information can be obtained from the British Library. Their useful guide includes information on how to find people using a variety of sources. The guide can be accessed: <http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelprestype/offpubs/electreg/traceliv/tracing.html>

For additional copies, to enquire about the content of this document or request the information in an alternative format, please contact the UK Missing Persons Bureau on **0845 000 5481** or email [missingpersons bureau@npia.pnn.police.uk](mailto:missingpersons bureau@npia.pnn.police.uk)

The information in this guide is not definitive and should be utilised in conjunction with police guidance and independent legal advice.

If you require information on what to do when someone goes missing, factsheets can be downloaded from the NPIA website [www.npia.police.uk/mpb](http://www.npia.police.uk/mpb)

## How to report sightings of missing people

Factsheet 10

### Contact the police

If you have seen someone who is missing or you have information about the location of someone who is missing – maybe you have seen a missing person appeal in the press – contact the police. Many police forces now use the 24 hour non-emergency 101 telephone number, or you can find the non-emergency number for the local police force in the telephone directory, or online [http://www.police.uk/?view=force\\_sites](http://www.police.uk/?view=force_sites)

Alternatively, you can contact the UK Missing Persons Bureau on **0845 000 5481** (or +44 (0)1256 602979 if outside the UK). The Bureau can provide advice on which police force to contact and also pass on information to the relevant police force.

### Contact the charity Missing People

If you don't want to contact the police, you can report a sighting to the charity Missing People and the information will be passed on to the police. Missing People can be contacted on:

- **0500 700 700** from inside the UK; or
- **+44 (0)20 8392 4545** from outside the UK
- Email:  
**seensomeone@missingpeople.org.uk**
- Website: **www.missingpeople.org**



### Sightings of missing children

There are some dedicated phone numbers that can be used to report sightings of missing children, in addition to the police phone numbers.

Information or sightings of missing children can be reported using the **Missing Kids** freephone number **0808 100 8777**.

Information or sightings of missing children can also be made on the **116 000** hotline, which operates across Europe and is staffed by nominated missing person charities in each country.

### How to provide information anonymously

All of the aforementioned organisations will accept anonymous information. You can also call Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111** or complete an anonymous form <https://secure.crimestoppers-uk.org/ams.form.anonymous.asp>

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For more information and other factsheets, including one on what to do when someone goes missing, please visit: **www.npia.police.uk/mpb**

## If you are missing

### How to send a message home and access help

Factsheet 11

#### How to send a message home

If you have gone missing (or don't have contact with your family but think you may have been reported missing) and you want to let the police and your family know that you are safe, you can go to any police station with proof of your identity and tell them that you have been reported missing. The police will confirm who you are and will speak with you to confirm that you are safe and well. The police will then let your family or whoever reported you missing know that you are safe.

If you are an adult and do not want anyone to know where you are, the police are obliged to respect your wishes and will not inform your family of your whereabouts. However, if you are a vulnerable person (for example under the age of 16 or suffering from a mental illness) the police officer will have a duty to protect you and may decide, on the basis of a risk assessment, to take a different course of action.

If you are missing and need help from the police, visit your local police station or telephone your local police force. Telephone numbers can be found in the phone book or online: [www.police.uk/?view=force\\_sites](http://www.police.uk/?view=force_sites)

**If you are in danger and need urgent assistance, dial 999**

If you would rather not contact the police, the charity Missing People can send a message to your family or friends. They can also advise and assist if you would like to be reunited with your family, but are unsure as to how to go about this.

#### Help and Support from Missing People

The charity Missing People is the largest UK charity helping missing people and their family and friends. Missing People also provides advice and assistance to children and adults who are missing. They can provide you with support and send a message back to your family. They won't tell anyone that you have contacted them unless you want them to. If you do want to get back in touch with your family, they can help.

#### Missing People

Telephone: **0500 700 700**  
Email: **[info@missingpeople.org.uk](mailto:info@missingpeople.org.uk)**  
Website: **[www.missingpeople.org.uk](http://www.missingpeople.org.uk)**

#### Missing People's helplines are there for you

Missing People run a Runaway Helpline for those under 18 and a Message Home Service for those aged 18 and over. These are confidential services, which provide help, advice and support to people who are missing. These services are available via phone, text or email.

#### Runaway Helpline for young people

The Runaway Helpline is a UK-wide free and confidential service for anyone who has run away from care or home or has been forced to leave home. The helpline is open 24 hours a day and can be accessed by telephone, text or email. If you want them to, the Runaway Helpline could help you to contact your family, a carer, a support agency such as Social Services or a young person's project. They

may also be able to help you find a place of safety. You can even text the helpline if you have no credit left on your mobile phone. Contact the Runaway Helpline on:

Freephone: **0808 800 70 70**  
Email: **runaway@missingpeople.org**  
Text: **80234**

### **Message Home helpline for adults**

Message Home is a service accessible 24 hours a day for adults who are missing and are seeking confidential help and advice. Message Home can help you to contact your family or pass on a message to them, to let them know that you are safe. They will only pass on your message and will not tell your family any other information, such as your location.

Freephone: **0800 700 740**  
Email: **messagehome@missingpeople.org.uk**  
Text: **80234**

### **If you are in distress**

If you are upset, worried or depressed and want to speak to someone, but don't want to contact the police or a missing person's organisation, you can contact a confidential helpline.

### **Samaritans**

You can talk to Samaritans any time of the day or night if you are worried, upset, confused or would just like to talk to someone. Samaritans provides confidential emotional support and you can reach them by telephone, email, letter or alternatively, you can drop into a local branch and talk to someone face to face.

Telephone: **08457 90 90 90** or **116 123**  
Email: **jo@samaritans.org**  
Website: **www.samaritans.org**

### **Childline**

The Childline helpline is there for you if you want to talk about anything that is troubling you.

Childline provides help, information and advice for children and young people, whether they are missing or not, at any time of the day or night.

You can call their helpline or you can send an email or chat with someone online, using their website.

Telephone: **0800 11 11** or **116 111**  
Website: **www.childline.org.uk**

Email: **www.childline.org.uk/Talk/Pages/Email.aspx**

Online Chat: **www.childline.org.uk/Talk/Chat/Pages/OnlineChat.aspx**

### **116 000**

By phoning **116 000**, you will be put in touch with an organisation which supports missing persons and their families. The number operates in the UK and in Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Spain. Calls to **116 000** in the UK are answered by the charity Missing People (see previous section) and callers can access the Message Home facility and the Runaways Helpline, as well as being able to speak to an advisor.

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