

# What Missing People can do: Appeals and Sightings

Missing People aims to offer advice, practical assistance and emotional support when someone is missing. Missing People can be contacted around the clock and in confidence on **116 000** or [116000@missingpeople.org.uk](mailto:116000@missingpeople.org.uk)

One of the ways we can offer support is by helping in the search for a missing person. There are a number of different types of appeal we can make, and not all appeals will be suitable in every situation. In order for us to make an appeal, the missing person must have been reported as missing to the police. Missing People will then contact the police to check whether our involvement is appropriate.

If you are considering launching an appeal, there are many different means of doing so:

## Poster Appeals

A poster incorporating both a photograph and details of the missing person can be produced by Missing People and distributed in relevant locations such as the area where the person was last seen, where they are known to visit or have contacts. It is important this is done in consultation with both families and the police to ensure publicity is appropriate, and targeted in an effective manner. Not only will this maximise the chances of them being seen, it may also prompt the missing person to contact us themselves. Missing People are continually expanding our dedicated network of people across the UK who are committed to joining the search in their workplace or neighbourhood. We also have agreements with companies like Virgin Trains who display posters on our behalf. At present we have 3,400 poster partners in the UK who are willing to display posters. Anyone can download and distribute a poster from our website, although they will need to provide an email address and will be given guidelines on responsible use.

## Web Appeals

Missing People can launch a dedicated appeal for a missing person on the [Help us Find](#) part of our website, which receives over 34,000 hits every month. We can also create a profile to feature on various social networking sites using pictures and information provided by you. We have over 11,000 followers on Twitter and a further 3,000 on Facebook and these can be used to maximise exposure and generate awareness as people read and share the information with others. Of course you may prefer to set up a Facebook or other social networking page yourself and we are always happy to provide advice if you need it. It is important to include the police or Missing People's contact details to allow people to send information or sightings.

## Media Appeals

Despite the popularity of social media sites, print media, television and radio are all powerful tools for reaching millions of people quickly. For example Missing People have a working partnership with a number of media outlets who publish a photograph and appeal for information about a different missing person each week. We have produced guidance advising on all aspects of [Working with the Media](#), including the advantages and disadvantages of doing so, in order to help you make an informed choice.

We are happy to offer advice to families and friends who may have additional questions or concerns and will keep you informed of any further opportunities for maintaining publicity such as interviews, articles, programmes or editorial features.

## Sightings

Whether in print, or social media, appeals may generate feedback from the public which is vitally important in the search for vulnerable missing people. Missing People can handle the flow of possible sightings and information 24 hours a day. All incoming information is passed on to the police for them to follow up.

We do not communicate directly with families about sightings. We know how important updates and possible sightings are to families but we also want information that is shared to be credible and helpful. The police make these judgements and are best placed to update you.

First Published: December 2011. Updated: December 2015.

For further information and guidance on the issues addressed in this guidance sheet, or for support relating to any aspect of someone going missing, call or text Missing People's free and confidential 24 hour helpline on **116 000** or email [116000@missingpeople.org.uk](mailto:116000@missingpeople.org.uk)

Whilst this information has been provided in good faith, it should not be taken as legal advice. For information tailored to your circumstances, please contact your police force, solicitor or an advisory organisation as appropriate to your query.

Please let us know whether this guidance has been useful, either by answering a few short questions at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/MissingPeopleGuidance> or by emailing your comments to [policyandresearch@missingpeople.org.uk](mailto:policyandresearch@missingpeople.org.uk)