

# Family Feedback Survey 2012

*“I thought if anyone can find him, you would know more than I would know. There's no way I could contact him, so I thought you'd have more information and help than I have. I just didn't know where to start.”*

Missing People is committed to listening to, and learning from, people who use the charity's services. In line with the Service User Involvement Strategy 2010, Missing People has conducted a survey with a number of families who had reported a family member missing to the charity. This report outlines the main findings and recommendations.

## Key Points

- One hundred and twenty nine family members of missing and formerly missing adults and children were surveyed from January to April 2012. They were mostly women aged over 35 years looking for male relatives. Three-quarters (76 per cent) had also received services from the police, and half (50 per cent) had experienced physical or mental health problems as a result of having a family member missing.
- Missing People has met a number of recommendations identified in the 2011 Family Feedback Survey. In particular, the development of online Family Guidance leaflets. At the time of writing (May 2012) there have been over 16,500 downloads of Guidance documents.
- Once again, issues around case resolution were raised, and families have pointed to a need for support or guidance for the reconnection process.
- The most commonly requested new services were post-closure support, followed closely by family support groups.
- Overall satisfaction with the charity's services continues to be high, although the findings show a slightly mixed picture.
- Once again, there was strong support for increased awareness of the charity's services, and for families to be signposted to Missing People soon after reporting someone missing.

## 1. About the survey

*“I hope that some of the things I've said will help future families.”*

The survey's main aims are:

- To gather information directly from families, about their experiences, in a confidential way.
- To measure families' satisfaction with Missing People.
- To measure changes in satisfaction over time.
- To find out what new services families would like to be provided.

In 2012 there were 365 eligible families in the sample, of whom 129 (35 per cent) fully completed the questionnaire between 27<sup>th</sup> January and 21<sup>st</sup> April 2011.<sup>1</sup>

For the first time, an online version of the questionnaire was made available, at the request of a family member who was contacted by telephone. This was subsequently made available, by email, to the remainder of the sample. Some questions were not asked of the online respondents, for reasons of length and appropriateness. Where this was the case, analyses are based on the number of people who were asked the question (i.e. 113 telephone responses).

Seventy-nine people could not be reached by phone or email. Thirty-four were reached by phone but declined to take part. One hundred and twenty three emails were sent, of which seven people took part anonymously and eight took part online and included their names.

Of 129 completed questionnaires, 16 were completed online and the remaining 113 by phone. After taking part in the survey, 19 people requested a call back from the Services team to discuss their case.

## 2. Findings

*“Your family are too near, too involved. You need someone to be able to listen without being emotionally involved”*

### **Who took part?**

- Ninety-five (74 per cent) of the family members who took part were female compared to 34 (26 per cent) male. The proportion of women taking part is slightly lower than 2011 (77 per cent) and slightly higher than 2010 (69 per cent).
- Ninety-two (71 per cent) of participants were aged 35-64 years while the rest were evenly split between under 35s (14 per cent) and over 65s (15 per cent). Nineteen per cent of all participants were women aged between 45 and 54 years.

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<sup>1</sup> One hundred and thirty five started and six of these dropped out before the end. Analyses refer to completed questionnaires only.

- The most common relationships between the family members who took part in the survey and the missing people were:
  - mothers looking for sons (n=23, 18%);
  - sisters looking for brothers (n=20, 16%);
  - mothers looking for daughters (n=16, 12%);
  - daughters and sons looking for fathers (n=10, 8%);
  - brothers looking for brothers (n=8, 6%)
  - fathers looking for sons (n=6, 5%); and
  - wives looking for husbands (n=5, 4%).
- Fifty (39 per cent) respondents had children aged under 18 years living in their home. The total number of children living with respondents was 91.
- Eighty-one per cent of respondents identified themselves as white, which is slightly lower than UK-wide proportions<sup>1</sup>. Eight per cent of respondents identified themselves as Black or Black British and eight per cent as Asian or Asian British. English was the main language spoken at home in 91 per cent of the households. Other languages reported by respondents were: Albanian, Bengali, Czech, Creole, Farsi, German, Gaelic (Scottish), Polish, Portuguese, Somali, Urdu and Welsh.
- Twenty-six per cent of respondents own their home with a mortgage, 27 per cent rent from a council or housing association, and 29 per cent own their homes outright. Sixteen per cent rent privately.
- Nearly half (40 per cent) of respondents felt that, financially, they were ‘just about getting by’, 13 per cent were finding it ‘quite difficult’ and seven per cent were finding it ‘very difficult’. 28 per cent felt they were ‘doing alright’ and just 10 per cent felt they were ‘living comfortably’.
- Eighty-three per cent of respondents had internet access at home, while 77 per cent reported that they had an email address they could use for personal email.

### **Who are the missing people?**

*“It wasn't like him not to send a Christmas card.”*

- Nearly three-quarters of the missing people were male (92 people, 71 per cent) and just over a quarter were female (37, 29 per cent).
- Nearly half (58 people, 45 per cent) of all respondents’ missing family members were men aged between 25 and 54 years.

### **About the search**

*“Just thought you might have some way of finding out where he was. You want to know that he's safe.”*

Eighty-one family members (63 per cent) who took part in the survey reported that their missing family member had been found alive and 45 (35 per cent) that the person was still missing. A further three people (two per cent) who took part reported that their family member had been found to have died while missing.

*“We all just want him to give us a ring. He probably thinks he's better off where he is.”*

- In nearly one-fifth (19 per cent) of cases where the missing person was found alive, they had allowed the charity to let their family know that they were safe and well but had chosen not to resume contact.<sup>2</sup>

*“If he wants to remain missing there's not a lot anyone can do. He says he's ok.”*

- Of the 81 people who had been found alive, nearly half (47 per cent) had been missing more than once.
- Eighty-one per cent of all respondents had reported their family member missing to the police. Six people had tried to report it to the police but the police had not opened a case. Sixty three per cent of police reports were made within 48 hours.
- Fifty-three per cent felt that the charity had added ‘a great deal’ to the police service (52 per cent in 2011, 72 per cent in 2010). Overall 79 per cent felt that Missing People had added value to the services the police were able to offer (79 per cent in 2011, 86 per cent in 2010).

### **Accessing Missing People**

*“We got straight through and they answered all our questions.”*

- Around one-third of respondents (34 per cent) found out about the charity via the internet (up from 23 per cent in 2011 and 26 per cent in 2010), 33 per cent from the police and 9 per cent through word of mouth.
- Respondents were asked how best Missing People might reach out to families in need. Thirty-six per cent thought that the charity should contact families via the police and 37 per cent thought that the police should give families the charity's details.
- Two-thirds (66 per cent) of respondents felt that the police should tell families about Missing People as soon as they made a missing person report.
- Fifty-eight per cent had used the Missing People website, most (but not all) of whom have internet access at home.

### **Initial expectations**

*“I didn't have any [expectations], we were just desperate. Just trying to find him.”*

- A total of 69 per cent said their expectations had been exceeded or completely met. However, respondents whose case was still ongoing were less likely to report that their expectations had been met.

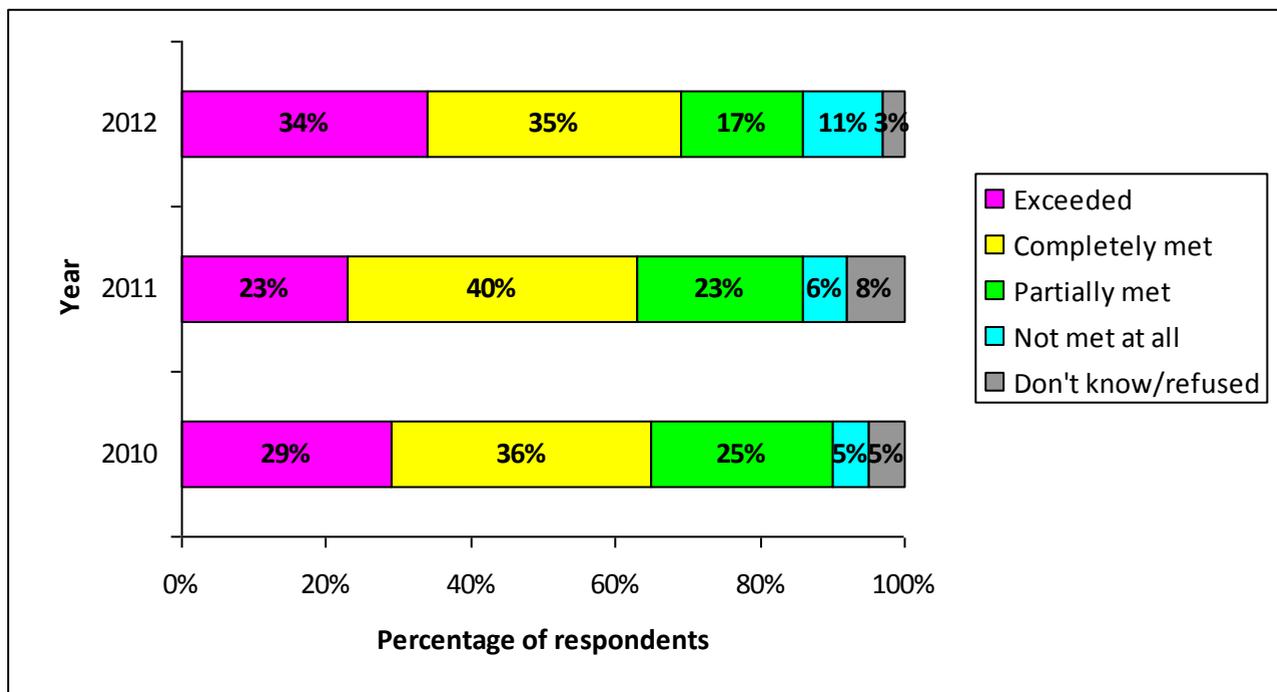
*“I thought they would have the resources to actually go out and search. But what I realised they did was to make posters and distribute those.”*

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<sup>2</sup> Sometimes, when the charity finds a missing person, that person does not wish their family to be notified. Where this confidentiality had been requested, the family was not included in this survey.

Figure 1 below shows how well respondents' expectations were met in each of the three years of the annual survey.

**Figure 1: How well respondents' expectations of the charity were met**



*“I just hoped she'd be found.”*

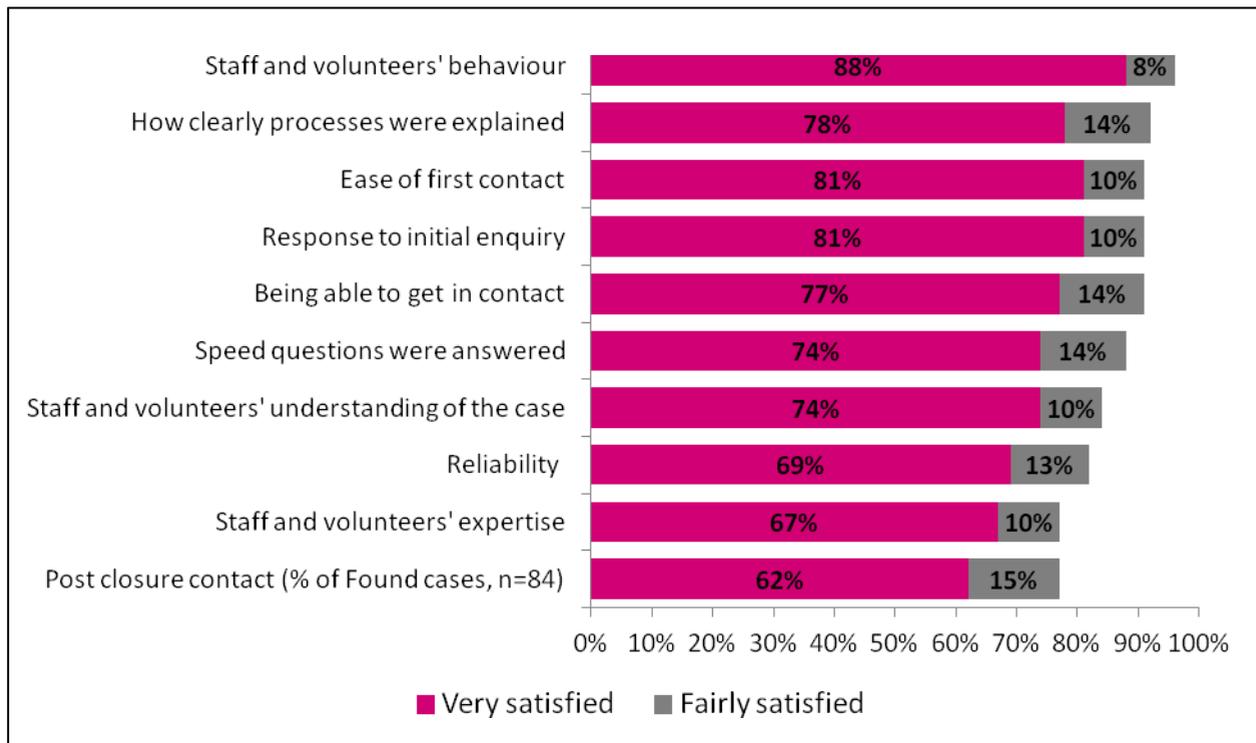
Overall, the responses suggest that, while the outcome of the case has some relationship to whether family members feel their expectations have been met, it is still possible for the charity to exceed families' expectations even when their relative remains missing.

**Satisfaction**

*“The staff at Missing People were extremely professional, responded quickly and were above all else, very kind.”*

Figure 2 shows the percentage of family members who were 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with aspects of the charity's services.

**Figure 2: Percentage of respondents\* who were 'Very' or 'Fairly' satisfied with each aspect of service.**



\*N=129 unless otherwise stated

*“On my second call I had to explain the situation again.”*

While one might expect to see some movement in rankings, only two aspects have surpassed the satisfaction level of the previous two years. The remainder were equal or lower.

Two aspects have a higher satisfaction rating in 2012 compared to both 2011 and 2010:

- How clearly processes were explained;
- the speed with which questions were answered;

Some are higher than 2011 but still lower than 2010

- Staff and volunteers’ behaviour
- Ease of first contact
- Response to initial enquiry

One that has regained the 2010 score after a dip

- Being able to get in contact

Four aspects were lower than in 2010 and 2011

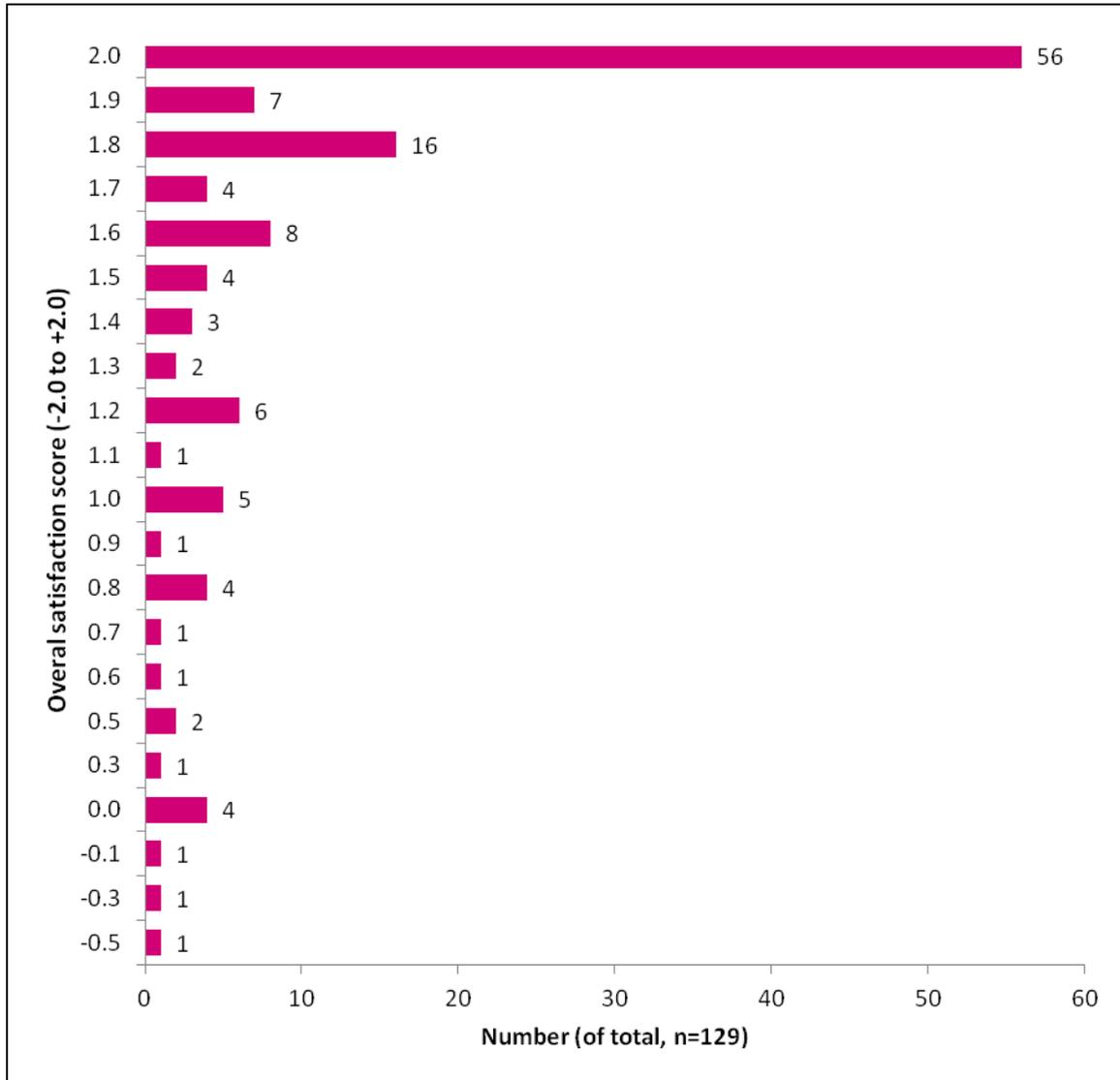
- Staff and volunteers’ understanding of the case
- Reliability
- Staff and volunteers’ expertise
- Post closure contact

*“Initially I sent an email and the staff member came back quickly, the initial contact was fine, it's just that they couldn't find her.”*

## Overall satisfaction

A composite score was created as a measure of respondents' overall satisfaction with the charity. Figure 3 below shows the distribution of these composite scores across all respondents.

**Figure 3: Respondents' overall satisfaction scores**



## Changes in satisfaction over time

Each year, family members whose case was opened in the previous calendar year have taken part in the survey. Each respondent takes part only once. This means that we cannot measure an individual's changing satisfaction over time. Rather, we can review how snapshots of different years differ from each other.

Figure 4 below shows the mean, median and mode satisfaction scores in the three sweeps of the annual survey. The mode (most common) score remains the maximum +2.0. The median has remained reasonably stable, regaining the 2010 figure in 2012. The mean average dipped in 2011 and, while it has not regained the 2010 level, has risen in 2012.

Figure 4: Overall satisfaction; mean, median and mode scores over time

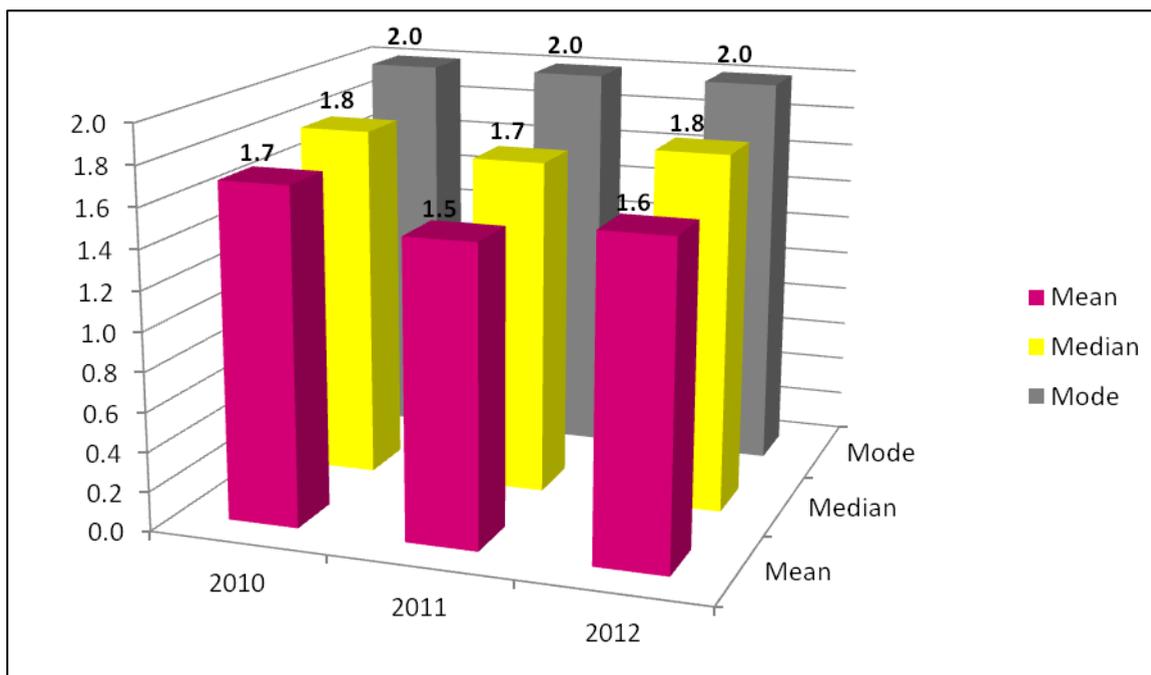


Table 1: Satisfaction scores by case status, 2010 to 2012

	2010		2011		2012	
	Still missing	Found alive	Still missing	Found alive	Still missing	Found alive
Mean	1.4	1.8	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.7
Median	1.6	2.0	1.6	1.8	1.7	1.9
Mode	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0

*"You are great, you kept us sane!"*

- Ninety-eight per cent of respondents said that they would recommend Missing People to someone in a similar situation.

*"I would and have recommended you to others whose sons and daughters have gone missing."*

### Experiencing missing

*"I just wanted to be able to speak to someone who could understand what we were going through."*

As shown in *Living in Limbo: The experiences of, and impacts on, the families of missing people* (Holmes, 2008), families experience a range of practical impacts when someone goes missing, as well as the emotional and social effects.

*“It's like I had someone who was sharing my distress, it's not something that you can share with family and friends especially in my case as it was shameful, so it was a relief when Missing People got in contact with me. The lady I spoke to was very considerate and understanding and she explained everything to me”*

- One hundred and twenty-six respondents were asked about the impacts they had experienced (excluding cases where the missing person had been found to have died). Nearly two-thirds (62 per cent) had experienced one of the impacts listed below. Table 2 shows the practical impacts reported by respondents to the survey.

*“I was walking round like a zombie.”*

**Table 2: Impacts experienced**

Impact experienced	Percentage of respondents (n=126)*
Problems notifying a bank or building society	16%
Problems dealing with an insurance company	4%
Problems dealing with social security or benefits	13%
Problems dealing with a mortgage	2%
Problems dealing with rent	6%
Other legal, financial or ownership issues	12%
Problems dealing with the media	5%
Any practical impact	29%
Physical health concerns	31%
Mental health concerns	45%
Any health impact	50%
Any practical and/or health impact	62%

\*Column not additive because respondents could report more than one impact.

*“You can't focus on anything because you're worrying. I dread to think what might happen.”*

- Half of all respondents who were asked about impacts (50 per cent) reported having experienced mental and/or physical health concerns as a result of a family member being missing. More than a quarter (29 per cent) experienced practical impacts, compared to 31 per cent in 2010 and 27 per cent in 2011.

*“I've had letters from the bank. I phoned them and told them he doesn't live here but they keep writing.”*

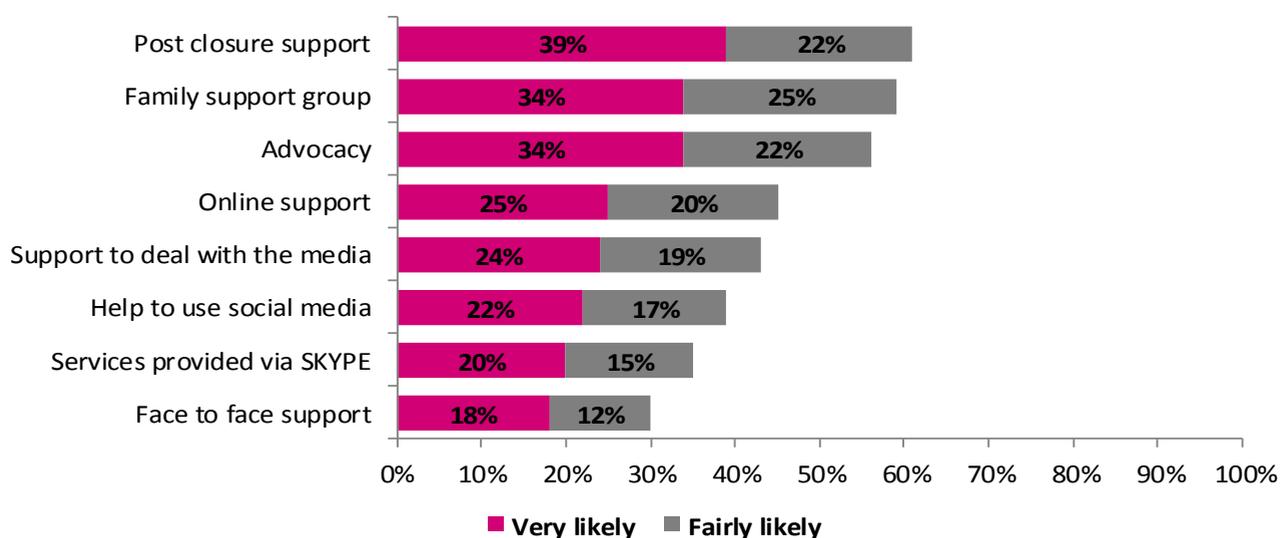
### **New services**

- Family members responded positively to a variety of potential new services. The most common new services that were spontaneously suggested were family support groups, and counselling, followed closely by written online and paper information materials.

*“You need a friend in those circumstances. Have to a face to face meeting rather than over the phone.”*

Figure 5 shows the percentage of family members who, said they would be (or would have been) 'very likely' or 'fairly likely' to use listed new potential services.

**Figure 5 : Prompted likelihood of using new services**



***"We still try to help where we can now as you do such a good job."***

- Seventy-one people, 62 per cent of those asked, offered to stay involved and help with the development of new services.

***"If there's anything at all within the region I could help with please let me know."***

### **Fundraising**

- Twenty-six per cent of family members who took part had donated to the charity, down from 28 per cent in 2011 and 37 per cent in 2010.

***"I sent money to Missing People, even though I don't have much money. They sent me a letter back which was lovely, I was so impressed."***

- Eighty-four per cent (down from 90 per cent in 2011 and 94 per cent in 2010) think it is acceptable for the charity to ask service users for their support. Forty-two per cent (down from 51 per cent in 2011 and 53 per cent in 2010) of all respondents thought it acceptable to ask service users for support while their family member was missing.

***"If you have not been able to offer any help to the person in contact you should not then be contacting them asking for financial contributions. I am aware I am able to contribute but I have been given the impression that your main work is for collection of income."***

- Half of all respondents expressed interest in supporting the charity either by sharing their story or raising funds in some way.

### 3. Summary and recommendations

#### *Overall satisfaction*

- Overall satisfaction remains high. On a scale of +2.0 to -2.0 (positive being satisfied and negative being dissatisfied) the mean average across all cases was +1.6. The mode (most common) score was +2.0 and the median (middle score) was +1.8.
- Overall satisfaction was slightly higher than the 2011 mean of +1.5 (mode +2.0, median +1.7) although still slightly lower than in 2010.
- The satisfaction scores of respondents whose family member was still missing were slightly higher than in 2010 and 2011, although were lower than the scores of people whose family member had been found.
- Four aspects of the service had a lower proportion of people who were 'Very' or 'Fairly' satisfied, compared to 2010 and 2011: staff and volunteers' understanding of the case; reliability; staff and volunteers' expertise; and post closure contact.
- Ninety-eight per cent of respondents would recommend Missing People to someone in a similar situation.

#### *Early signposting*

- Satisfaction with the ease of first getting in touch was higher than in 2011, but still lower than in 2010; in 2011 91 per cent of respondents reported being 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied, compared with 89 per cent the year before and 98 per cent in 2010. This suggests that the process for alerting families to available services could be further improved.
- There was strong support for early signposting, whereby families would be alerted to the services available from Missing People soon after making a missing person report to the police. Sixty-six per cent of respondents said this should happen as soon as a family makes a missing person report to the police, and a further eight per cent said this should happen within the first week.
- There was approximately equal support for the police passing on the charity's details (37 per cent) and the charity contacting families directly (36 per cent). Telephone contact was preferred by the greatest number (48 per cent), compared to email, text message or paper methods of signposting.

#### *Impacts on families*

*"It's in waves, sometimes you're great, and sometimes it'll hit you. You can't imagine it. I couldn't have. It's incredibly hard."*

- A lower proportion of people experienced each impact, apart from problems with banks and building societies (which remained stable from the previous year) and mental health concerns (which was slightly higher than the previous year). However, a greater proportion reported experiencing at least one impact (62 per cent, compared to 55 per cent in 2011).

- This year new questions were included to ask about mental and physical health effects. A high proportion of respondents had experienced physical (31 per cent) or mental (45 per cent) health concerns. This indicates an area where additional advice or support may be of value to families.

### ***Financial and fundraising***

- The reported financial burden on respondents was substantial. Over one-quarter (29 per cent) experienced practical or financial problems as a result of a family member being missing. Twenty per cent reported that, financially, they were finding life 'very' or 'fairly' difficult, compared to 23 per cent in 2011 and 15 per cent in the previous year.
- The struggling national economy may provide some explanation for the fact that a smaller proportion of respondents had donated to the charity in 2012; 26 per cent down from 28 per cent in 2011 and 37 per cent in 2010. A lower proportion said that it was acceptable for the charity to ask families for their support: 84 per cent, down from 90 per cent in 2011 and 94 per cent in 2010.

### ***New services***

- Since Missing People's previous survey, the charity has implemented a number of new services that were recommended by families. In light of this, respondents were asked about a different set of potential new services in 2012.

#### ***"I needed advice on how to explain to other people about the incident."***

- The most popular new service, proportionally, was post-closure support, followed closely by family support groups.

#### ***"Face to face, either visits or drop-ins."***

#### ***"I would have preferred to have contact after she was found [...] it would have been good to have a call and advice."***

- Suggestions from respondents will continue to be taken into account in the ongoing development work of the charity.

#### ***"It would be nice to have access to different doctors and different towns. Although doctors are very confidential, when it comes to someone with mental illness, Missing People should be able to access information to share with families who are so very worried."***

### ***Achievements since previous sweeps of the Family Feedback Survey***

- In 2011, the service that the highest proportion of respondents reported they would use (or would have used) was written guidance about issues families might encounter when someone is missing. A range of Family Guidance<sup>3</sup> has since been made available, and these documents have been downloaded more than 16,500 times in the six months they have been online.

<sup>3</sup> [www.missingpeople.org.uk/familyguidance](http://www.missingpeople.org.uk/familyguidance)

***"More information about what steps are likely to be undertaken by the police and others. Checklist of places to look and things to check for"***

- More detailed guidance on a number of complex legal issues is under development, in collaboration with expert partners.

***"Some legal advice about a family's rights regarding a missing person."***

- The charity continues to develop therapeutic support for families when someone is missing.<sup>4</sup> An expert Advisory Group is overseeing this work, and participants to date have been extremely positive about the experience.
- Findings from earlier surveys indicated strong support among families for Missing People's campaigning strategy, which has been brought to bear through the ongoing work of the Missing Rights<sup>5</sup> campaign. The campaign continues to work on behalf of families, providing them with opportunities to support the campaign by getting involved in a number of ways. In 2012, respondents were offered further information about the Missing Rights campaign, with many showing their support through contacting their MP.
- Evidence about the extent of the impacts on families has supported Missing People's work with the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Runaway and Missing Children and Adults Inquiry into support for families of missing people.<sup>6</sup>
- Missing People will continue to lend support to a Clinical Psychologist in training to conduct a project exploring the emotional impacts on children when a family member is missing.<sup>7</sup> This project will aim to outline main areas of impact and explore possible approaches to supporting children left behind.
- The ReConnect Network<sup>8</sup> continues to develop and will be extended to reach out to more vulnerable adults with mental health problems.

***"It might be an idea, because of what happened in our case, that if the police find someone who they believe has mental health issues and is obviously in distress, they liaise with local health services and also check the missing persons database before they relinquish custody of that individual."***

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4 [https://www.missingpeople.org.uk/component/option,com\\_docman/Itemid,131/format,raw/gid,194/task,doc\\_view/tmpl,component/](https://www.missingpeople.org.uk/component/option,com_docman/Itemid,131/format,raw/gid,194/task,doc_view/tmpl,component/)

5 <https://www.missingpeople.org.uk/missingrights>

6 <http://www.missingpeople.org.uk/missing-people/about-the-issue/inquiry-into-support-for-families>

7 <http://www.missingpeople.org.uk/missing-people/latest-news/have-you-been-affected-by-a-family-member-going-missing>

8 <http://www.missingpeople.org.uk/reconnect>

## Final comments

*“Really fantastic service all round. Efficient, helpful and very compassionate. Thank you.”*

*“All staff have been understanding, calming, reassuring, knowledgeable and proactive. Thank you”*

*“Whatever you are doing you're doing very effectively and efficiently. It took Missing People a very short time to find someone I'd been searching for for 9 years so just keep up the good work!”*

*“Thank you for helping me when [he] disappeared. I am trying to look forward now, and put that dreadful time behind me. [...] I just want to get on with life now, and am so happy that [he] is alive and in contact with me, and I just live each day as it comes - although things are not perfect, they could have been so much worse. Thank you very much for your help.”*

*“Just a very big thank you for all the hard work and support!”*

*“I don't know how I would have coped without the people on the end of the phone. Your family are too near, too involved. You need someone to be able to listen without being emotionally involved. Every single one I spoke to, and I spoke to various ones, every single one were absolutely, absolutely fantastic.”*

## References

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=455> accessed 15<sup>th</sup> July 2011

Holmes, L. (2008) *Living in Limbo: The experiences of, and impacts on, the families of missing people* (London: Missing People)

## Report author

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/population-trends-rd/population-trends/no--145--autumn-2011/jrd-population-trends-145.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> Missing People's new suite of Family Guidance leaflets were published on the charity website in December 2011, after many respondents' cases had been resolved. Where relevant, survey respondents were made aware of the Guidance. Similarly, respondents whose case was still unresolved were made aware of other new services available from the charity.