

Family Feedback Survey 2011

“It was nice to just be able to speak about it and have someone to listen.”

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 of this survey.

Key points

- 159 family members of missing and formerly missing adults and children were surveyed in January to March 2011. They were mostly women aged over 35 years looking for male relatives. 80% of them had also received services from the police, and nearly half had experienced physical or mental health problems as a result of having a family member go missing.
- Missing People has met a number of recommendations identified in the 2010 Family Feedback Survey. In particular, development work towards piloting a counselling programme has successfully engaged family members in deliberative planning activities, and will begin to address the expressed need for emotional support groups and specialist counselling.
- There is a continued need for increased clarity around processes and for written guidance for families on a range of topics.
- Overall satisfaction with the charity’s services continues to be high, although the 2011 respondents reported slightly lower satisfaction than the 2010 sample.
- 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

“Thank you for providing the support I needed during those rough times.”

The survey’s main aims are:

- To gather information directly, and confidentially, from families about their experiences
- 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 2011, there were 297 eligible families in the sample, of whom 159 (54%) fully completed the questionnaire between 17 January and 1 April. After taking part in the survey, 27 people requested a call back from the Services team to discuss their case.

2. Findings

“I think it would be nice if the families were able to put messages on the computer [...] it would be nice to leave little messages [for families] who are also left.”

Who took part?

- 122 (77%) of the family members who took part were female, compared to 37 (23%) male.
- 70% of participants were aged 35-64 years. 23% of all participants were women aged between 45 and 54 years.
- The most common relationships between the family members who took part in the survey and the missing people were:
 - mothers looking for sons (n=37, 23%);
 - mothers looking for daughters (n=21, 13%);
 - sisters looking for brothers (n=15, 9%);
 - daughters looking for fathers (n=11, 7%);
 - fathers looking for sons (n=11, 7%);
 - wives looking for husbands (n=10, 6%); and
 - brothers looking for brothers (n=10, 6%)
- 62 respondents had children aged under 18 years living in their home. The total number of children living with respondents was at least 116.
- 84% of respondents identified themselves as White, which is lower than UK-wide proportions.¹ 9% of respondents identified themselves as Black or Black British, and 6% as Asian or Asian British. English is the main language spoken at home in 91% of the households. Other languages reported by respondents were: Fijian, Gaelic, Pashto, Polish, Punjabi, Sindhi, Sinhala, Somali, Spanish and Urdu.
- 30% of respondents owned their home with a mortgage, 30% rented from a council or housing association, and 35% owned their homes outright.
- Over a third (34%) of respondents felt that, financially, they were ‘just about getting by’, 14% were finding it ‘quite difficult’ and 9% were finding it ‘very difficult’. 30% felt they were ‘doing alright’ and just 10% felt they were ‘living comfortably’.

¹ <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=455>

Who are the missing people?

“In my case my [missing relative] might be in a psychiatric hospital. So for me, I would like to inform all hospitals and get in touch with hospitals via Missing People or another organisation and put up posters and stuff. I could provide the money but I don’t have the resources to do this without the help of another organisation.”

- Over two thirds of the missing people were male (114, 72%) and just under a third were female (45, 28%).
- Half (80, 50%) of all respondents’ missing family members were men aged between 25 and 54 years.

About the search

“Mentally, I had to think all night long, I expected him to walk in the door, I had to start something I didn't want to acknowledge.”

- 81 family members (51%) who took part in the survey reported that their missing family member had been found, and 64 (40%) that the person was still missing. A further 14 people (9%) who took part reported that their family member had been found to have died while missing. This broadly reflects the proportions found in the available sample.
- In almost a quarter (24%) 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 with their family.
- Of the 83 people who had been found alive, more than a third (35%) had gone missing more than once.
- 80% of all respondents had reported their family member missing to the police. Two people had tried to make a police report, but the police had not opened a case. 65% of police cases were reported missing to the police within 48 hours.
- 52% felt that the charity had added ‘a great deal’ to the police service. Overall, 79% felt that Missing People had added value to the services the police were able to offer.

Accessing Missing People

“The police should tell families to contact you. It is a lifeline.”

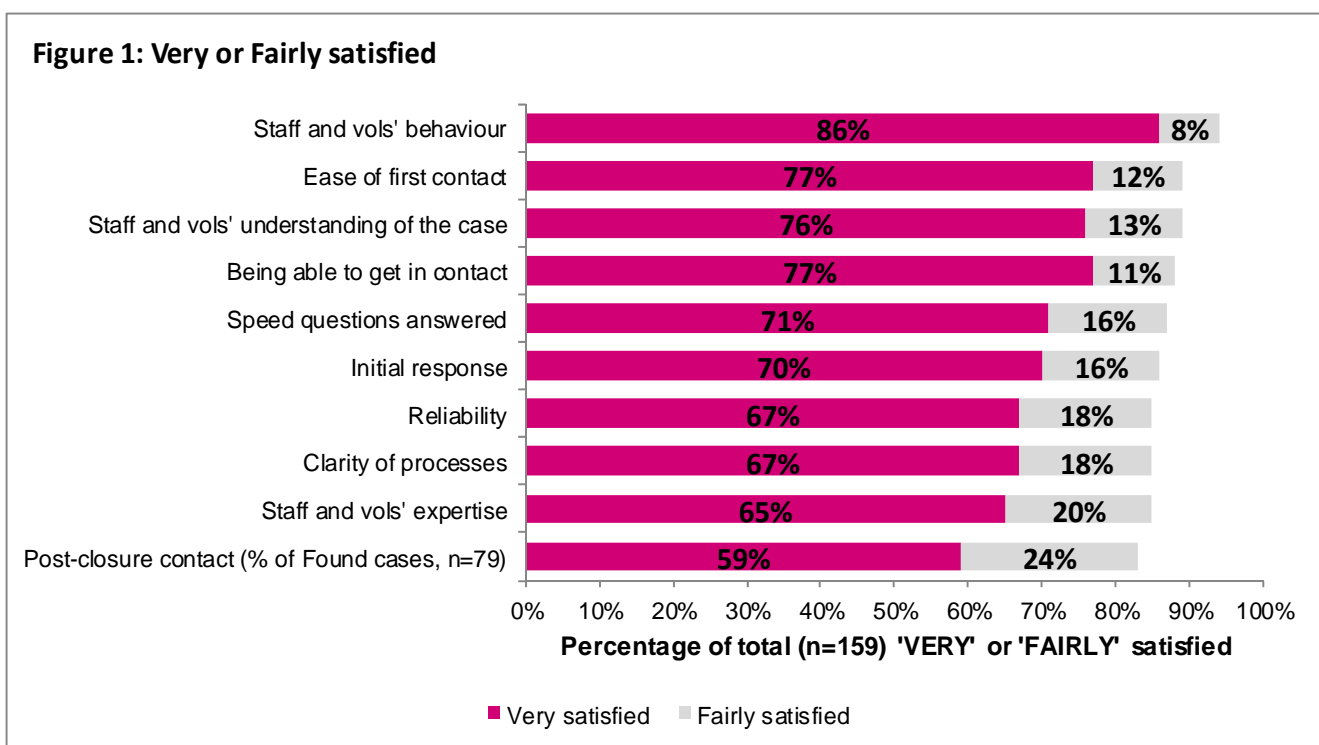
- 23% found out about the charity via the internet, 37% from the police and 16% through word of mouth.
- Respondents were asked how best Missing People might reach out to families in need. 41% thought that the charity should contact families via the police, and 38% thought that the police should give families the charity’s details.

- When asked how best the police could tell families about the charity, 50 respondents thought the telephone, 29 would have preferred written contact, and 15 suggested email.
- 58% had used the Missing People website, most of whom have internet access at home.

Satisfaction

“Obviously my initial expectations were to get in contact with my [missing relative], but once I'd spoke to them, my expectations were back to the 'it may be it may not be' so I was sad obviously. They absolutely did what they said they would do.”

Figure 1 shows the percentage of family members who were ‘very satisfied’ or ‘fairly satisfied’ with the range of the charity’s services.



“The information was quite inconsistent, as we dealt with many different people in the charity.”

An overall satisfaction score was derived for each respondent. On a scale of +2.0 to -2.0 (positive being satisfied and negative being dissatisfied) the mean average across all cases was +1.5. The median (middle score) was +1.7, and the mode (most common) score was +2.0.

“Staff were very polite and professional and well mannered.”

Table 1: Average satisfaction scores by case status

| | Mean average ² | Median | Mode | Range |
|----------------|---------------------------|--------|------|--------------|
| All cases | +1.5 | +1.7 | +2.0 | -0.6 to +2.0 |
| Found alive | +1.6 | +1.8 | +2.0 | -0.6 to +2.0 |
| Found deceased | +1.6 | +1.7 | +2.0 | +0.6 to +2.0 |
| Still missing | +1.4 | +1.6 | +2.0 | -0.1 to +2.0 |

“Very helpful, they listen. They're doing what they can, it was all explained to me, that they might not be able to find [my missing relative].”

Figures 2, 3 and 4 show these satisfaction scores plotted against the length of time the family had been in touch with the charity.

Figure 2: Satisfaction scores by duration for cases where the missing person has been found alive

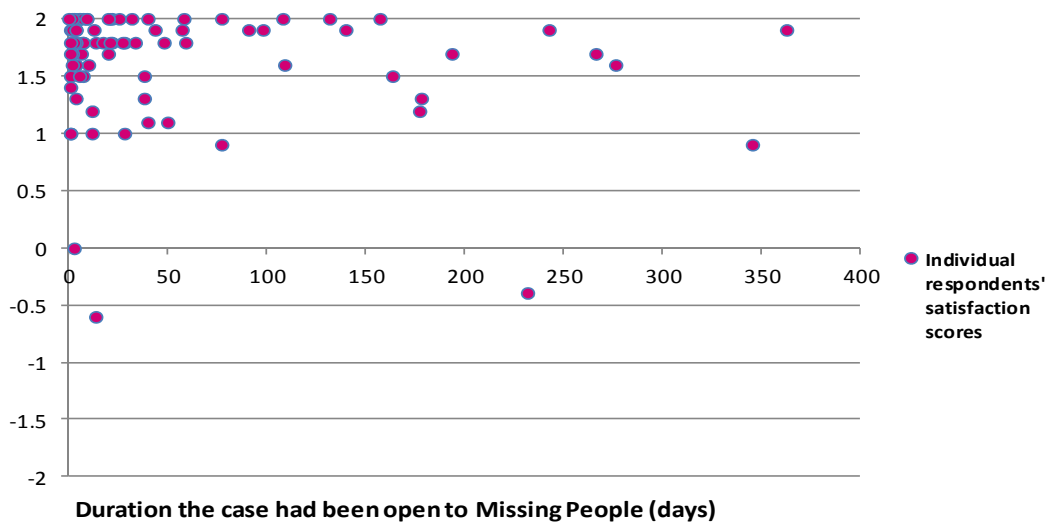


Figure 3: Satisfaction scores by duration for cases where the missing person has been found to have died



² The mean average is derived by adding all the scores together and dividing by the number of scores (i.e. the number of respondents). The median is the score in the middle of the range of scores. The mode is the score which appears most frequently. The range is the span between the lowest and the highest scores.

Figure 4: Satisfaction scores by duration for cases where the missing person is still missing



“I was impressed with every aspect of what you do.”

Experiencing missing

“...the bank won’t allow us to do anything. His bank is going into debt because of his direct debits. I know banks have confidentiality, but in this case they should be a little more accommodating.”

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.

“I’ve had to take out money from my own account to put into his account so that his direct debits continue going, I mean his benefits have stopped as he isn’t signing on but his council tax is still going.”

145 respondents were asked about the impacts they had experienced (excluding cases where the missing person had been found to have died). Table 2 shows the practical impacts reported by respondents to the survey.

Table 2: Impacts experienced

| Impact experienced | Number* | Percentage (of 145 asked)* |
|---|---------|----------------------------|
| Problems notifying a bank or building society | 23 | 16% |
| Problems dealing with a mortgage | 9 | 6% |
| Problems dealing with rent or bills | 21 | 14% |
| Problems dealing with an insurance company | 11 | 8% |
| Problems dealing with social security or benefits | 24 | 17% |
| Problems dealing with the media | 16 | 11% |
| Physical health concerns | 56 | 39% |
| Mental health concerns | 60 | 41% |

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

Over half of all respondents who were asked about impacts (52%), reported having experienced mental and/or physical health concerns as a result of a family member being missing. More than a quarter (27%) reported having experienced practical impacts, compared to 31% in 2010.

“Like most families, we have never dealt with media, and then all of a sudden we had journalists in our living room and all these media stations wanting to know what we were feeling and what had happened. We had never dealt with these people before and although they were understanding it would have been nice to have been guided through it.”

New services

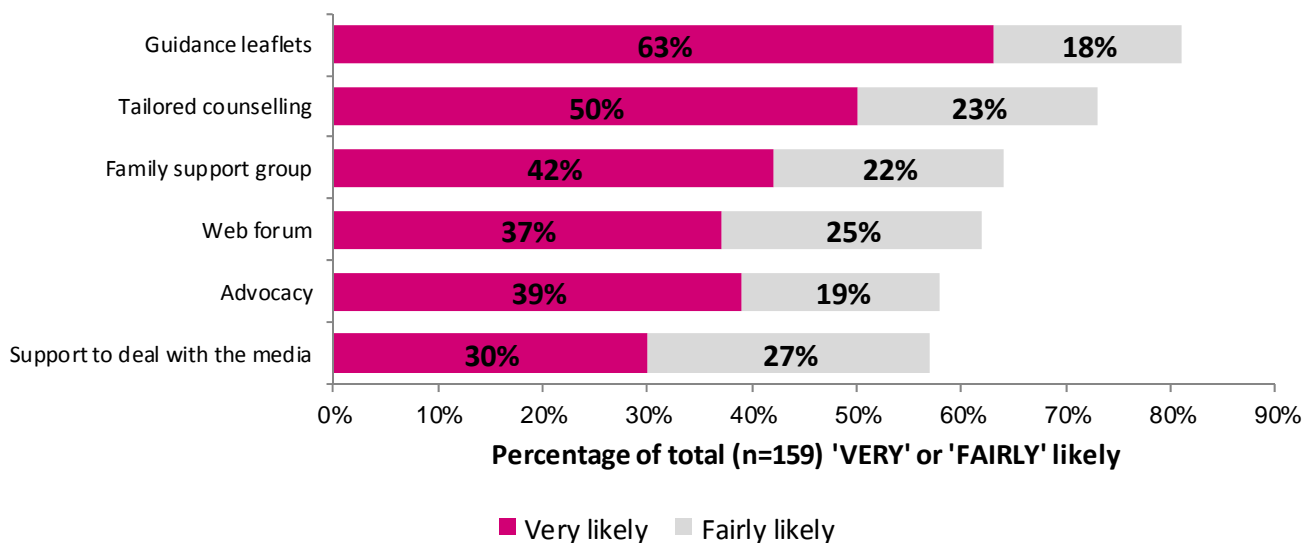
- Family members responded positively to a variety of potential new services. The most common new services that were spontaneously suggested were telephone and face to face counselling, and family support groups.

“We understand the police offer counselling. Our friend’s number plate was stolen and they were offered counselling by the police, but [...] we’ve been offered no counselling, you feel there’s no real back up or support.”

- 106 people (67%), offered to stay involved and help with the development of new services.

Figure 5 shows the percentage of family members who, when read the list of potential new services, said they would be (or would have been) ‘very likely’ or ‘fairly likely’ to use them.

Figure 5: Very or Fairly likely



“A leaflet on what to do next. I don't think anyone ever gave us a leaflet saying what to do now that your family member has gone missing. We got verbal advice. A leaflet is something you take away with you.”

Fundraising

- 28% of family members who took part had donated to the charity. This is slightly lower than last year's 37%.

“We were at a brick wall, so Missing People was a massive help as we had nowhere else to go.”

- 90% think it is acceptable for the charity to ask service users for their support (down from 94%), and 51% of all respondents (down from 53%) thought it acceptable to ask service users for support while their family member was missing.

“I think you must be one of the best agencies I've ever dealt with.”

- More than one-third expressed interest in supporting the charity, either by sharing their story or raising funds in some way.

“...at the time I needed someone to speak to who knew what I was going through and that's what I got.”

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 +1.5. The mode (most common) score was +2.0 and the median (middle score) was +1.7. The scores ranged from -0.6 to +2.0.

- Overall satisfaction was slightly lower than the 2010 mean of +1.7 (mode +2.0, median +1.8).
- The satisfaction scores of those respondents whose family member was still missing were the same as in 2010 (mean +1.4, median +1.6, mode +2.0, range -0.1 to +2.0). The mean and median scores of those whose family member had been found alive were lower (mean +1.6 compared to mean +1.8 in 2010, median +1.8 compared to +2.0, mode stable at +2.0).
- It should be borne in mind that only two year's worth of data is available, so no patterns can be robustly identified.
- The aspects of the service that scored most highly remained the same as 2010: staff and volunteers' behaviour and understanding of cases, and the ease of making first contact.
- Most aspects of the service saw a reduction in the percentage of respondents who were 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied, except for the speed of answering questions, reliability and post-closure contact. However, once again, this should not be taken as an indication of a reduction in quality, as the changes were very small.

Early signposting

- Satisfaction with the ease of first getting in touch was lower than in 2010; in 2011 89% of respondents reported being 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied, compared with 98% the year before. This suggests that the process for alerting families to available services could be 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. 35% of respondents said this should happen as soon as a family makes a missing person report to the police, and a further 15% said this should happen within the first week.
- The preferred method of early signposting was for the charity to contact families directly (41%), compared to 38% who said the police should pass on the charity's details. Telephone contact was preferred by the greatest number, compared to email, text message or paper methods of signposting.

Impacts on families

- Although slightly different questions were asked this year compared to last, where comparison is possible, a higher proportion of families reported experiencing practical and financial impacts associated with a family member being missing. The highest rise was in the proportion of families who had experienced problems dealing with social security benefits – a rise from 8% to 17%. This may reflect the higher proportion of respondents in the sample whose family member was still missing, although the duration that the missing person had been away was not substantially higher in the 2011 sample.
- This year, new questions were included to ask about mental and physical health effects. A high proportion of respondents have experienced physical (39%) or mental (41%) 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 a quarter (27%) reported experiencing a practical or financial impact as a result of a family member being missing.
- 23% reported that, financially, they were finding life 'very' or 'fairly' difficult, compared to 15% in the previous year.
- This may provide some explanation for the fact that, in 2011, a smaller proportion of respondents had donated to the charity; 28% down from 37% in 2010. Once again, however, a high proportion (90%) felt that it was acceptable for the charity to ask families for their support.

New services

- 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. In terms of satisfaction, how clearly processes were explained scored relatively low, with the second lowest proportion of respondents reporting that they were 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied. These findings emphasise the continued need for improved written information for families.

"As well as a poster, we could have done with some instructions, hey look, if you're going to search this is how you can do it. Where to phone, who to contact, what are you going to do with your posters?"

- The need for support services once again scored highly, including both tailored counselling and encounter-based peer support groups.

"If you got robbed you'd get a counsellor or something, but if someone goes missing you don't really have that guidance."

- Since the completion of the survey, a number of respondents, who had indicated willingness to stay involved with the charity, have contributed to the development of a counselling programme, and will continue to be involved with the on-going pilot. There is a great deal of scope for this, using this method of contacting family members for deliberative engagement in the future.

Achievements since the first Family Feedback Survey in 2010

"...everything you did for me was spot on. It was brilliant."

- As recommended, written materials are being prepared by the charity to meet the on-going need for improved written guidance and clarity around the charity's procedures, and wider impacts that families might face.
- As recommended, further work was undertaken with families to explore the need for extended emotional support services. As a result of this, a counselling programme is due to be piloted and evaluated over the coming year. The roll out of Local Coordinators will also begin to address this area of work.

- The charity has endorsed the need for improved understanding of the experiences of formerly missing people and their families once a missing incident has been resolved. Work has been done to improve referral routes to bereavement support in the event of a missing person who is found to have died. Further research is also planned during the coming year to explore the variety and nature of experiences families face when a missing person is found.
- Findings from the 2010 survey indicated strong support among families for Missing People's campaigning strategy, which has been brought to bear through the on-going work of the Missing Rights campaign. The campaign continues to work on behalf of families, and provides families with opportunities to support the campaign by getting involved in a number of ways.
- Missing People will be lending support to a trainee Clinical Psychologist to conduct a project exploring the emotional impacts on children when a family member is missing. This project will aim to outline the main areas of impact, and explore possible approaches to supporting children left behind.

"Really great service from Missing People. Bravo."

References

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

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

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