

What Missing People can do: Lost Contact Tracing Service

Introduction

If you have lost touch with a relative (this does not include a current or ex-spouse or partner) we may be able to help you find them using our Lost Contact Tracing Service. This service is free of charge and can be used if:

- You are a direct relative of the missing person (a parent, child/stepchild, grandparent, grandchild, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew or cousin)
- The police have not assessed the missing person as vulnerable or at-risk
- You know the full name and date of birth of the missing person
- Both you and the missing person are over 18 years old
- The missing person has been in touch within the last 5 years but not within the last 3 months
- The missing person was last known to be in the UK

Our aim is to make contact with your missing relative and let them know you are looking for them and would like to be back in touch. If the missing person is found, we also offer support to them and their family, through what is often a difficult and emotional time.

To access this service. Please contact us:

Call Freefone: **0500 700 700**

Email: services@missingpeople.org.uk

The service we provide

We try to find your missing relative's current address. We make all our enquiries from our central office, and this is done in strict accordance with data protection law and respecting individual rights to privacy. We can search various address databases such as [Peopletracer](#) and we can also request a search of current addresses from Government agencies.

If we obtain a missing person's address it will remain confidential and we will not be able to release it anyone unless the missing person agrees. The same rules on privacy apply for any external agencies working on our behalf.

If an address is found, a letter will be sent to your missing relative. We will explain that we are acting on your behalf and that you would like to be back in contact, and we will encourage your relative to contact us.

If your relative responds, we will support them to re-establish contact if that is what they want. Sometimes they ask us to pass on a message to let you know they are alright. If you would like us to, we can pass on a letter from you or another family member to explain why you want to get in touch, or we can pass messages between you and your relative to start to rebuild contact if both of you agree.

On the other hand, if your relative isn't ready, or doesn't want to make contact, we will respect their choice. We also will not pass news or information to either side if it is potentially distressing.

If your relative already has your contact details they may, of course, get in touch with you directly once they know you are looking for them. However, we will not release your or your family's contact details to your relative without your consent.

How long does it take to find someone?

On average, tracing someone can take 3 months to a year. One enquiry is made at a time. It can also take time for someone to decide whether or not to make contact.

If a relative can't be traced

We will make all the enquiries we can to try to trace your relative. In the meantime you may want to send us a letter, which we will keep sealed on file, to pass on to them if they make contact with us.

If an address has been found and we have sent them a letter, but have received no response, we will send a second letter, either to the same address or a new one if it is found. However if there is no response to the second letter we will end our enquiries.

We understand it can be difficult to accept that a missing relative can't be found, but we will always try to support you and your family in this situation.

If a relative doesn't want their family to know he/she has been found

Occasionally a missing person is found but he or she tells us that they don't want to be in contact with their family, or even that they don't want anyone to know that they have been found. It is your relative's right not to have their whereabouts disclosed and we must respect their decision.

However, if we think the person could be vulnerable or at risk we will offer them support, seek help for them or encourage them to seek help themselves. We will also encourage them to contact us whenever they feel ready to do so – whether this takes weeks, months or even years.

Keeping family members informed and providing help & support

We will regularly update you on the progress of our enquiries, and we will let you know if we make any contact with your relative if he or she agrees to this.

If we have to end our enquiries we will suggest alternative tracing options – further information about alternative tracing services can be found on our [Other Sources of Help: Tracing Services](#) guidance sheet.

Make a donation

Missing People's Lost Contact tracing service is provided free of charge. If you would like to support Missing People's work you can make a donation to the charity. There are a variety of ways you can do this, find out more by visiting us at:

<https://www.missingpeople.org.uk/missing-people/donate>

or by phone on **0208 392 4521**

Alternatively you can send a cheque to:

Missing People
Roebuck House
284 Upper Richmond Road West
London
SW14 7JE

First Published: March 2012

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 Missing People's free and confidential 24 hour helpline on 0500 700 700 or email services@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.