

# What to do if Someone goes Missing Abroad

If a relative or someone close to you goes missing your anxiety can be overwhelming; if they go missing in another country this can be even more distressing. Your concern about his or her personal safety and wellbeing will probably be magnified by the uncertainty of how to start a search in a foreign country with a culture, language and system which may be different to your own. This factsheet will help you with information as to who to contact to get a search started overseas, and what details you can provide to help in this.

## What to Do

The Lucie Blackman Trust is a charity dedicated to providing help, advice and practical support when someone goes missing overseas. Their advice is as follows:

- Consider whether there are simple steps you can take to try and find where your loved one is. For example, if you know where they are staying, try calling to see if anyone on the premises knows where they are. If this does not produce any information, you could also try contacting the police or hospitals in or near the place where you know the person was living or travelling.
- If he or she does seem to be missing, contact the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on **020 7008 1500** and ask for the Consular Directorate. The Foreign Office will appoint a caseworker if appropriate and contact the British Embassy in the country concerned.
- Contact the UK police either for the area where the missing person lives, or your own local police station, and ask them to inform the UK National Central Bureau of Interpol. If necessary, Interpol can then make contact with the relevant foreign police, although they will usually do so only if they consider the missing person to be at risk of harm.
- The Lucie Blackman Trust can provide help and support tailored to your situation. It is open 24 hours a day and its contact details are:
  - telephone: **020 7047 5060**
  - email: [ops@lbtrust.org](mailto:ops@lbtrust.org)
  - website: <http://www.lbtrust.org>

## What information should you provide when someone goes missing abroad?

To help in the search it is a good idea to gather together as much information as you can about the missing person and their recent activity and travel plans as this could be essential in helping the relevant authorities to find them.

Whilst you might not have all of the following pieces of information, things you might want to consider will be:

- The missing person's full name, date of birth and place of birth
- His/her mobile phone number and email address
- The last time you or anyone else that you know had contact with him/her and where this was
- His/her travel plans
- His/her passport details
- His/her travel insurance details
- Any travel blog/personal website/social network details
- Bank or building society account details (the police may ask the bank or building society for details of when and where the account was last accessed)
- A recent photo
- When you were expecting the missing person to contact you and why
- Whether there was anything in his/her last email/phone call/text/blog/social network message which could give a clue as to whereabouts and/or who he/she could have been with
- Whether the families of fellow travellers could provide any useful information
- Whether there is anyone else the missing person could have been in touch with
- Any other relevant information which could be of use in the search such as, and including any physical or mental health issues

## The search

The search will be carried out by the local police in the country where the person has gone missing, but the UK police, the Foreign Office, Interpol and the relevant British Embassy may also be involved depending on the nature of the disappearance. If you have contacted the Lucie Blackman Trust (see the contact details above), they can liaise with these organisations as appropriate and help and advise you as the search continues. The Trust may also be able to help you in other ways including international travel, media, publicity and with any legal issues you might have; you may want to travel to the country concerned, for example, in which case it can arrange flights for you; it can also handle the media and arrange posters for publicity.

## Specialist help if the missing person is a child

If a child has gone missing whilst you are visiting another European Union country, you should contact both the UK police and the police local to where you are staying abroad. You can also call the hotline number **116000** which can put you in contact with a charity in the country you are calling from which deals with missing children.

This number does not operate throughout the whole of Europe, but should operate in Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Spain. It also applies in the UK.

## If a child may have been abducted

If you believe your child has been taken abroad without your consent, or your child is being kept in a foreign country following an overseas trip, you should contact the UK police and the Foreign Office (see contact details above). There are also 3 other organisations which may be able to help you:

**1. The International Child Abduction and Contact Unit ('ICACU').** This is part of the Official Solicitor's office (a part of the Ministry of Justice) and is the central authority for international child abduction. The contact details are:

- telephone: **0203 681 2608**
- email for new applications: [icacu@offsol.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:icacu@offsol.gsi.gov.uk);  
with general enquiries: [enquiries@offsol.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@offsol.gsi.gov.uk)
- website: <https://www.gov.uk/return-or-contact-abducted-child>

The ICACU can provide a leaflet with information and advice in relation to international child abduction and contact, and it also holds a referral list of specialist solicitors who may be able to help you.

**2. Reunite International Child Abduction Centre ('Reunite').** This is a UK charity specialising in international parental child abduction and it runs a telephone advice line which gives information and support to parents, family members and guardians. The contact details are:

- advice line: **0116 2556 234**
- telephone: **0116 2555 345**
- email: [reunite@dircon.co.uk](mailto:reunite@dircon.co.uk)
- website: [www.reunite.org](http://www.reunite.org)

Reunite also has child abduction prevention guides, and can give you a list of solicitors who specialise in child abduction cases.

### **3. Action Against Abduction** (formerly Parents and Abducted Children Together (PACT)).

This is an international, not-for-profit organisation registered in both the UK and USA. The charity campaigns, conducts research and helps to make policy to secure the better protection of children who go missing or are abducted. Their website also contains advice on steps for parents to take if their child has been abducted to a Hague Convention country. Although the organisation does not operate a helpline, it does have advice available on its website.

- email: [support@actionagainstabduction.org](mailto:support@actionagainstabduction.org)
- website: [www.actionagainstabduction.org](http://www.actionagainstabduction.org)

#### **If the police/ Foreign Office/ Lucie Blackman cannot help**

If you are trying to find someone abroad with whom you have lost contact over a period of time, you will be unable to get help from the police, the Foreign Office or the Lucie Blackman Trust, all of which will help only if someone has recently and unexpectedly gone missing overseas. Instead you might want to use a tracing service.

The Red Cross or Salvation Army may be able to help you – please see our web pages on [other sources of help](#) for further information and contact details.

#### **Support from Missing People**

Missing People provides around the clock emotional support for the families of people who have gone missing abroad, and in some cases can circulate publicity about the missing person. To access this support please contact Missing People:

- telephone: **116 000**
- email: [116000@missingpeople.org.uk](mailto:116000@missingpeople.org.uk)

This guidance was originally produced in partnership with Missing Abroad, now the Lucie Blackman Trust.



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 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)