Fact Sheet

Tracing Missing Persons

This fact sheet aims to help those who have lost track of someone, usually a friend or relative, in the recent past. It is not intended for those looking for their ancestors or for adopted persons. Missing persons may include people who have decided to break with their family due to an underlying problem and it may therefore be necessary to carry out research with sensitivity. The suggestions listed below will give you some hints on how to approach the problem and some ideas of what sources are available.

This fact sheet has been produced by

Islington Central Reference Library
2 Fieldway Crescent
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Urgent and worrying cases, including runaways and abductions

Report or Find a Missing Person
https://www.gov.uk/report-missing-person
This Government website giving practical advice on what to do if someone goes missing.

Local Police
W: https://www.police.uk/contact
If someone goes missing, contact anyone you think may know their whereabouts. Then, if you’re still concerned, you can contact your local police. You don’t have to wait 24 hours before contacting them. The police may ask you for: their photo; details of their friends or relatives; details of places they often visit; whether they had a medical condition; a sample of their DNA (e.g. from a toothbrush). With a relative’s permission, they may also ask to search the person’s home. The person will be recorded as missing and their details made available to other UK police forces within 48 hours.

If the police find a person aged under 18, their parent(s) or guardian(s) will usually be told their whereabouts unless police believe the child’s safety is at risk. If the person is aged over 18, the police won’t pass on their whereabouts without their permission.

UK Missing Persons Bureau
Albert Day Building, Sunningdale Park, Larch Avenue, Ascot, BERKS, SL5 0QE
T: 08450005481
E: missingpersons bureau@nca.x.gsi.gov.uk
W: http://www.missingpersons.police.uk/
The UK national and international point of contact for all missing person and unidentified body investigations. Provide support and advice to police forces in order to resolve cases and act as a hub for the exchange of information and expertise in this area. Maintain the national database of missing and unidentified records. You can search through some of our unidentified cases to see if you can help us establish their identity.

Missing Kids UK
W: http://uk.missingkids.com
Searchable by town, county, child’s name or alias. Information about what to do if your child is missing or has been abducted.

Missing People
284, Upper Richmond Road West, London, SW14 7JE.
T: Confidential helpline- freefone 116 000
E: 116000@missingpeople.org.uk
W: http://www.missingpeople.org.uk/
This UK charity is dedicated to help missing people and support their families and run Runaway Helpline.
Missing abroad

British Red Cross International Tracing and Messaging Services
London Office, Aztec Row, N1 0PW
T: 020 7704 5686
W: www.redcross.org.uk/what-we-do/finding-missing-family
To find your missing relatives as much information is needed as possible. They will help you fill out a form and send this information to the Red Cross or Red Crescent National Society in the country you think your relative is in, or to the International Committee of the Red Cross who will try to find your family. The ability to trace people depends on the information you can provide and local circumstances, including the security situation in the relevant country.

Missing Abroad
Lucie Blackman Trust, 66 High Street, Brading, Isle of Wight, PO36 0DQ.
T 020 7047 5060 or 01983718802
E: ops@lbtrust.org
W: www.missingabroad.org
A free service established by the Lucie Blackman Trust to support the families of people who have gone missing abroad. For cases of lost contact or long term missing family, use self-referral form on website.

Other resources for finding friends, colleagues, and relatives

The Salvation Army Family Tracing Service
101 Newington Causeway, London, SE1 6BN.
T: 0845 634 4747
E: family.tracing@salvationarmy.org.uk
W: www.salvationarmy.org.uk/uki/FamilyTracing
This tracing service exists to restore (or to sustain) family relationships by tracing relatives with whom contact has been lost.

Internet searches using engines such as Google, Yahoo, and Bing. Try Boolean searches (including “and”, “not” and “+”, or enclose names in quote marks) to focus your search. Try adding personal information, such as nicknames, schools and companies outside the quotes.

Trace http://wikiworldbook.com/trace-lost-friends-and-relatives is a highly effective “message board” tool to find people using the internet and crowd-sourcing.
Facebook http://www.facebook.com/find-friends, you need to join to use the ‘Search for Someone’ to look up members and try ‘Find People by Last Name’ to look for family members.
LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com) can help you trace friends and former work colleagues.
Pipl (www.pipl.com) searches social networks such as Myspace, Facebook and Bebo, as well as blog posts.

The BT Directory Enquiries website at www.thephonebook.com ‘Find a Person’ gives details of people with landlines ( however many people now just have mobile phones or are ex directory and so will not be found).
Peopletracer (www.peopletracer.co.uk) will search phone directories, electoral registers, as well as Births, Deaths or Marriages indexes. You have to buy credit to do so, however.

192.com http://www.192.com/people/ also searches phone books, electoral registers, and birth, marriage, and death indexes. Whilst phone directory entries are free, you will need to register and buy credits in order to access fuller content.

Birth, Marriages and Death Indexes
If necessary, you can get useful information from birth, marriage, or death certificates. First you will have to search the General Register Office’s (GRO) indexes for the person/event concerned. You can access these on various websites, such as http://www.freebmd.org.uk/. Then, using the index number, order copies of relevant birth, marriage and death certificates from the GRO, https://www.gov.uk/order-copy-birth-death-marriage-certificate. By this means you may be able to discover, for instance, if someone had died, the address where this happened, and the name and address of the informant (who may have known the deceased). For further information see: https://www.gov.uk/research-family-history

Wills
If you suspect the person you are looking for may have died, and you cannot find an entry in the death indexes (see above) it may be worth checking the index to wills kept by the Probate Registry, especially if the missing person may have died abroad on holiday, on business or while on duty with the armed services. You can do this online (for deaths after 1858). For more information go to https://www.gov.uk/wills-probate-inheritance/searching-for-probate-records. There is a charge (currently £10) for copies of probate records.

Electoral Registers
If you have an address, or near address, try searching the relevant voters’ registers. They may help you establish how long a person lived at an address, and who else lived there. The disappearance of a family member from the registers often means that they have moved home, married or died.

The British Library holds a set of Electoral Registers for the UK from 1832 onwards. The collection is complete from 1947 onwards but is patchy before WW2. The London Metropolitan Archive https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/london-metropolitan-archives/Pages/default.aspx holds records for the London County Council area. There may also be copies of local registers in public local history collections and county record offices.

Electoral records have been digitised by Find My Past (1832-1931), and Ancestry (1832-1965), the latter available free through Islington Libraries https://www.islington.gov.uk/libraries-arts-and-heritage/libraries/online-resources-journals-and-magazines/reference-resources. These are searchable by name.

For Islington, Electoral Services at Town Hall, Upper Street, Tel: 020 7527 3110 http://www.islington.gov.uk/involved/involvedvoting/votingregister/Pages/default.aspx holds the current register, and back copies can be viewed at the Islington Local History Centre,
Please note that Islington Libraries no longer hold copies of the current voters’ register.

Every effort has been made to ensure the information included in this factsheet is accurate. However we cannot accept responsibility if an organisation no longer exists or if information has changed since publication.

Islington Library & Heritage Services

Archway Library
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Email: archway.library@islington.gov.uk

Central Library
Tel: 020 7527 6900
Email: centrallending.library@islington.gov.uk

Finsbury Library
Tel: 020 7527 7960
Email: finsbury.library@islington.gov.uk

Cat and Mouse Library
T: 020 7527 7900
E: catandmouse.library@islington.gov.uk

Lewis Carroll Library
Tel: 020 7527 7936
Email: lewiscarroll.library@islington.gov.uk

Mildmay Library
Tel: 020 7527 7880
Email: mildmay.library@islington.gov.uk

N4 Library
Tel: 020 7527 7800
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