

Report calls for better police-family partnership in the search for missing people

December 19 2013, by Cara Macdowall

Better communication between the police and families of missing people is one of the key recommendations of a new report from the University of Glasgow.

The research, which draws on interviews with 25 [family](#) groups, all of whom have a missing relative, also suggests that there are variable standards of [police](#) partnership operating in different parts of the United Kingdom and that these should be standardised.

The study, Families living with absence: searching for missing people explains how families searching for lost relatives can often be doing this in parallel but not in partnership with the police.

The Primary Investigator on the project is Dr Hester Parr, from the University of Glasgow's School of Geographical and Earth Sciences. She said "This [report](#) is the result of extensive qualitative research with families all of whom have a missing relative. The report includes a variety of recommendations focusing on how searches are undertaken and communication between various agencies that take place around search, in partnership with police services."

She added "While the research found good practice in some instances, there were others where families felt that there could be better communication between themselves and the police. The quality tended to be reliant on individual officers and their approach to family liaison. What is needed is a change to procedures that is adopted through police

education and training."

Aileen (a pseudonym), one of the family members explains "You were repeating yourself over and over and [...] it did help once they gave me a named officer and said this officer has been allocated to your brother, you can contact him if you hear anything or you want to ask anything or whatever. So I felt a bit reassured because obviously as time went on, I was quite upset".

Lucy Holmes, Researcher Manager, Missing People said "This report offers important insights into the ways in which families search for missing loved ones. At Missing People we strive to be responsive to the needs of the people we support, and high quality research like this provides key evidence and lessons for us. We will work hard to use the research and its recommendations so that our [support services](#) for families continue to be the best they can be."

Joe Apps, Manager at the National Crime Agency's (NCA) UK Missing Persons Bureau said "We are always striving to improve the service and support we give to families affected in these difficult cases. The NCA's UK Missing Persons Bureau welcomes this insightful new report from The Geographies of Missing People research team and is working closely with police colleagues in response to the recommendations."

The researchers also recommend that families need to be better supported to celebrate and remember their missing person. The report highlights the isolation that families can experience and recommends that the Missing People's charity continues to provide a range of advice literature for families about the emotional and practical support services available.

The twenty five families that took part in the research are represented in this report through pseudonyms, so as to protect their identities. All have

diverse experiences. The interviewees are dominated by people who have had a family member missing for a relatively long time and the majority were parents.

The project is a partnership between the Universities of Glasgow and Dundee, the Scottish Institute for Policing Research, London Metropolitan Police, Police Scotland and supported with expert advice from the charity Missing People.

More information: The report, "Families living with absence: searching for missing people" is available here:

www.geographiesofmissingpeople.org.uk/

Provided by University of Glasgow

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