

# Has someone you know gone missing? Looking for someone with whom you've lost touch

Factsheet 9

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**If you have lost contact with someone over time and wish to get back in touch with them, information is provided below which may help with your search.**

If you are trying to trace someone who you have lost contact with, some useful information can be obtained using the internet or by contacting certain libraries or offices. Some charities also provide family tracing services that help people find family members that they have lost contact with. The details of some of the main sources of information which may assist you in your search are outlined below.

However, if you have recently and unexpectedly lost contact with someone, or you are concerned for someone's safety, you should report them as missing to the police.

### **Searching national records**

If you are searching for someone, you may find it helpful to look at some of the sources listed below, access to which is often available at your local library. You can also use the internet, where there is a number of websites and sources of information which may help you to trace friends or relatives.

### **Checking electoral registers**

You can use the electoral register to look for someone if you know the area where they last lived. The electoral register lists the name and address of everyone registered to vote in the local area. To find out how to access an electoral register, contact the local council for that area or check online at the DirectGov website:

<https://www.gov.uk/electoral-register/view-electoral-register>

or at the Electoral Commission website:

<https://www.yourvotematters.co.uk>

A full set of electoral registers for the UK since 1947 is held by the British Library. You can visit the library, or arrange for a member of staff to search the registers for you.

Telephone: **01937 546 546**

Email: [Customer-Services@bl.uk](mailto:Customer-Services@bl.uk)

Website: [www.bl.uk](http://www.bl.uk)

However, it is worth bearing in mind that not everyone will be listed on the electoral register. If you cannot find the person you are looking for on the register, this could mean that they:

- Have not registered to vote or have opted out of being listed on the register that is available to the public
- Have moved to another area
- Have married and changed their name
- Are no longer alive.

If a person has opted out of the electoral register that is available to the public, you can view the full electoral register at the relevant council office for the area in which they live.

### **Birth, marriage and death information**

You may find it useful to search the birth, marriage and death records. The General Register Office (GRO) holds records for England and Wales, of all:

- Births
- Marriages
- Civil Partnerships
- Deaths
- Adoptions granted by a court.

To find out how to search for this information, including your local register office, visit the DirectGov website:

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Governmentcitizensandrights/Registeringlifeevents/Researchinfamilyhistory/index.htm>

You can order copies of birth, marriage and death certificates online, by post or telephone from the GRO. You can also contact the local register office where the event was registered. Certificates should include addresses which you can use to check the electoral roll for the area.

### **Births, marriages and deaths that happened overseas**

The Overseas Department of the GRO holds records of births, marriages and deaths of British citizens overseas that have been

registered with British authorities. You can contact them to find out more or order copies of these documents.

Telephone: **0300 123 1837**

Email: [certificate.services@gro.gov.uk](mailto:certificate.services@gro.gov.uk)

Website:

<https://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificate/faqs-overseas.asp>

### Searching wills

If you think that the person you are looking for may have passed away, you can search records of wills made in England and Wales kept at the Probate Registry in London. It may also be useful to check these records if you think that the person you are looking for died abroad or while on duty in the Armed Forces.

You can either go in person or request that a search is carried out on your behalf for a small fee. If you want to visit in person, you will need to make an appointment in advance. You can use a form called a PA1S to request a search.

For more information, please see the UK Government's Justice website:

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/guidance/courts-and-tribunals/courts/probate/family-history.htm>

You can download the form PA1S from this site.

### Searching for name changes

If you think that the person you are looking for may have changed their name, you may wish to search the name change records. Most name changes are done using the Deed Poll process, which involves using a solicitor to legally change all or part of a name. The only official records of Deed Polls are those that are registered or 'enrolled' with the Royal Courts of Justice. You can get information about name changes enrolled within the last five years by writing to the Royal Courts of Justice in London. Enrolled changes of name that are over five years old are held at the National Archives at Kew, London.

To contact the Royal Courts of Justice about Deed Poll information, use one of the following:

Telephone: **020 7947 6000**

Or, write to:

The Royal Courts of Justice  
Strand  
London  
WC2A 2LL

### Finding your birth or adoptive family

If you are looking for your birth or adoptive family, you can check your original birth registration record once you are 18 years old.

For more information, see:

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/GovernmentCitizensandRights/Registeringlifeevents/Birthandadoptionrecords/index.htm>

A number of organisations may be able to assist you if you were adopted and are trying to trace your biological parents. For example, Adoption Services for Adults, who now hold the NORCAP Contact Register (NCR).

Telephone: **01628 481954**

Website: [www.adoptionservicesforadults.org.uk](http://www.adoptionservicesforadults.org.uk)

### Tracing services

You may be able to use the family tracing services provided by the Salvation Army, the Red Cross or private companies. Charges may apply for the services provided by these organisations. Additionally, you may wish to view records at the National Archives at Kew, London.

Website: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk)

### The Salvation Army Family Tracing Service

The Salvation Army Family Tracing Service helps to find relatives who are over the age of 18, with whom contact has been lost. This does not include individuals who have been adopted. More details are available on its website, where you can submit a Family Tracing Request form. The Family Tracing Service operates in 100 countries, so it may be able to help if you think that your relative may now be living abroad.

Telephone: **0845 634 4747**

Website: [www.salvationarmy.org.uk/familytracing](http://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/familytracing)

## The Red Cross

The Red Cross runs a tracing service for relatives who have lost contact due to war or international disasters. It can assist with tracing relatives or provide a service to exchange messages. The Red Cross may also be able to help if you think your relative may be overseas. Further information is available on the Red Cross website.

Telephone: **0344 871 1111**

Website: [www.redcross.org.uk/trace](http://www.redcross.org.uk/trace)

Email: [itms2@redcross.org.uk](mailto:itms2@redcross.org.uk)

## Missing-You.net

Missing-You.net is a free and instant on-line messaging service which allows users to attempt to contact people they are missing, including old friends and distant relatives.

Website: [www.missing-you.net](http://www.missing-you.net)

Email: [webmaster@missing-you.net](mailto:webmaster@missing-you.net)

## Commercial tracing services

Many organisations and businesses offer to trace missing people for you. Some websites offer to carry out research for a fee, but you should check that the service is run by people who are experienced in this kind of investigation. Details on organisations which trace people can be found by searching on the internet.

## Need more information?

Further information can be obtained from the British Library. Their useful guide includes information on how to find people using a variety of sources. The guide can be accessed: <http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelprestype/offpubs/electreg/traceliv/tracing.html>

If you require more information, other factsheets can be downloaded from the UK Missing Persons Unit website: <http://missingpersons.police.uk>.

To enquire about the content of this document or request the information in an alternative format, please contact the UK Missing Persons Unit on 0800 234 6034 or email [ukmpu@nca.gov.uk](mailto:ukmpu@nca.gov.uk)

The information in this guide is not definitive and should be utilised in conjunction with police guidance and independent legal advice.