

UK Missing Persons Unit Newsletter

From North Sea Alerts to Maritime Missing Persons Group

North Sea Alerts (NSAs) were established around 10 years ago through collaboration between the Dutch police and the UKMPU, with the aim of providing a means of communication for North Sea-bordering countries to alert other collaborating North Sea-bordering countries when it was believed that a missing person may have entered the water, and the body or remains could be recovered on their shorelines or in their coastal waters.



NSAs took the format of one-page bulletins containing an image of the missing person and key information that could assist with identification, and were distributed via international channels. Alongside the establishment of NSAs, the collaborating countries held regular meetings, which proceeded for a couple of years before ceasing due to lack of funding.

NSAs could also be distributed when an unidentified body was recovered on the shorelines or in the water of the participating country and it was believed that the deceased may have originated in one of the NSA participating countries.

The UKMPU continues to circulate these alerts via international channels on behalf of UK police forces, with several success stories over the years where they have contributed to the resolution of cases. NSAs have recently been re-branded, and are now known as Maritime Group Circulations (MGCs). This is to reflect a joint project between the UKMPU, National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) International Crime Coordination Centre (ICCC) and NCA UK International Crime Bureau (UKICB) to expand the list of MGC recipient countries, in order to encompass a greater breadth of relevant policing partners within Europe.

As part of this project, the UKMPU/ICCC have established a new Maritime Missing Persons Group (MMPG) to hold regular meetings between the member countries for the purposes of information sharing, best practice and the development of international relationships.

The first meeting of the MMPG was held in September, attended by the international membership and UK partners, and was a great success. The next meeting will be held in December, and all partners look forward to developing this exciting new group and increasing the opportunities for missing-person case resolutions across Europe.

Can you help identify this person?

We are seeking assistance in identifying a male, thought to be between 50 and 60, who was located deceased on Sennen Beach, Penzance, Cornwall, on 29th September.



For more details, see the case on our [website](#).

Black Notice Project

For the last 18 months, the UKMPU have been working in conjunction with the International Crime Coordination Centre (ICCC) and NCA INTERPOL on a bulk Black Notice project. Through the exchange of biometric detail, the project aims to identify any outstanding deceased individuals who may have travelled to the UK from abroad. Any potential matches will be fully investigated with the help of International partners.

Child Rescue Alert (CRA)

Child Rescue Alert (CRA) is based on an American concept called "Amber Alert" and was first piloted in 2005 by Sussex Police following the abduction and murder of Sarah Payne in 2000. CRA is intended to quickly alert members of the public of an abduction or other high risk disappearance of a child to provide a mechanism for policing to be able to receive and prioritise critical information from the public. In 2013 the word 'abduction' was removed from the CRA criteria to focus the decision-making process on the risks to the child. However, there has still not been a national alert since 2015 in Nottinghamshire.



In 2019 the new missing persons lead ACC Catherine Hankinson WYP commissioned a review. It concluded that CRA should remain as a tactical investigative option for UK policing in the most high risk cases. It was agreed between ACC Catherine Hankinson and Nikki Holland NCA Director of Investigations that UK policing would remain the strategic lead and the NCA would manage and deliver the service. However, in 2020 after consultation, CRA was redesigned and on the 1st July relaunched with new operational guidance. Force media teams, HOLMES managers are integral from the outset in a business as usual model with the police being the trusted source for the dissemination of information. Force strategic leads have been updated and during June over 600 key personnel in all forces were briefed.

CRA should offer two distinct benefits to UK policing. The first advantage is that CRA is a brand that is recognisable and immediately attracts the attention of the media and public. The second advantage is that it offers dissemination options that are not currently available to force media departments such as Facebook. If the user has the geolocation on they will receive the alert without their permission. Further opportunities are being explored.

The key changes to the scheme are:

- The NCA UKMPU have become the primary delivery agent as it was felt the scheme ought to be delivered by a law enforcement agency rather than a charitable organisation. The UKMPU also offer a 24/7 tactical advice service to support this service.
- The activation criteria have been updated to limit alerts to those most critical abduction or threat to life cases so as not to dilute the brand.
- The child is apparently under 18 years of age.
- There is a real, immediate risk to life.
- There is sufficient information available to enable the public to assist the police to locate the child.
- The process for activating an alert has been streamlined to make it easier to activate an alert when the criteria are met.

CRA is now more flexible and can be used in a targeted way, or be launched immediately on a regional or national level or grown organically as information is received or the level of media response dictates. It is a dynamic tool for consideration by a senior investigating officer (SIO) in the most high risk and problematic cases. By the use of the CRA brand, the effectiveness of publicity should be greater and hold more public attention than other high risk media appeals.

Staffing Updates

Congratulations to Louise Newell for her appointment to the position of Operations Manager, following the retirement of Joe Apps. Thank you Joe for all your hard work and dedication to the Unit, you have established a great team to hand over, which will only grow under Louise's management. Also, congratulations to Carla Parfitt on her promotion to temporary Senior Operations Officer.

The Unit has also welcomed a new Operations Officer, Data Analyst and Placement Students since the last newsletter was sent out, each of which has provided a brief outline about themselves below:

Natalia Swiatkowska

I am a University of Portsmouth student studying Criminology and Forensic Studies. I have gained interest in the missing persons area whilst taking a module at my university. Since, I have had a large interest in missing and homicides, women missing on a night out and child kidnappings. I am very excited to gain experience and opportunities throughout my placement.

Sara-Levinia Austin

I study Psychology with Criminology at Bath Spa University and decided a placement year would tie in great with my degree. I am so pleased to have been appointed one of the positions here as a Research Assistant at the UKMPU and cannot wait to progress and improve my own knowledge on missing and the unit's research capabilities further, over my placement year here.

Nicole Avis

After gaining an MA in Modern Political History I worked as an intelligence analyst within Avon and Somerset Police, based in the CSE disruption unit. Prior to this I was an intelligence analyst on the vulnerabilities team primarily working on cases relating to serious sexual offences, MSHT and CSEA. I am very pleased to have joined the UKMPU and to have this opportunity to develop my knowledge and skills.

Elnas Patel

Having completed the previous two UKMPU Data Reports earlier this year, Elnas has now re-joined the team to tackle the latest report covering the period 2019/20. Elnas is a data and information management professional and has previously worked in Education, Local Government and private industry.

Email: ukmpu@nca.gov.uk

Tel: 0800 234 6034

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