

THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

To study the international social policy response
and provision of services for the families, friends
and significant others of people who are missing.

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'If we know the why of a thing, we can figure out the how.' Nietzsche

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Signed

Date

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CONTACT AGENCIES

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

New York

Empire State Coalition
American Red Cross – Project Search
Safe Horizon

Washington

International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children
National Center for Missing & Exploited Children
Team H.O.P.E.
US Department of Justice – Office for Victims of Crime
American Red Cross
The Nation's Missing Children Organization and Center for
Missing Adults
The Rachel Foundation

UNITED KINGDOM

London

National Missing Persons Helpline
The Home Office
British Red Cross
International Social Service
The Samaritans

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Dublin

Victims Support

SWITZERLAND

Geneva

International Committee of the Red Cross
International Social Service

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Churchill Fellowship provided an opportunity to take an international snapshot of the current social policy response and service delivery to families and friends of missing persons.

Internationally there is a dearth of research into, and service delivery directed to, the families and friends of missing persons. However the issues which face families and friends of missing persons is starting to receive heightened attention at a state, national and international level.

On an international basis the International Committee of the Red Cross is pursuing 'The Missing – end the silence' project, the aim of which is to heighten awareness broadly about 'the tragedy of people unaccounted for as a result of armed conflict or internal violence and about the anguish of their families'. (*The Missing – end the silence* brochure, ICRC; undated)

The International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children is pursuing the establishment of an international network that will facilitate searches for, and heighten public awareness about the issue of, missing children.

At a national level, in the United States of America, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children provides comprehensive services relating to missing children. Team HOPE provides mutual help support to families of missing children across the breadth of the United States of America.

In the United Kingdom the National Missing Persons Helpline provides comprehensive information, referral and support assistance to families of missing persons across the breadth of the United Kingdom.

The Home Office of Her Majesty's Government, United Kingdom, is currently providing two year's funding to develop a protocol between the National Missing Persons Helpline and the Chief Constables across England and Wales. The second year of funding is provided to establish a holistic service delivery unit which will look at the broad issues related to missing persons, for example legal issues, support and counselling.

A new service has recently been established in the Republic of Ireland, which will provide families of people reported missing to the Police authorities with telephone information, referral and support.

In Australia, the NSW Government established the Families & Friends of Missing Persons Unit (FFMPU) in September 2000. The FFMPU is the only unit in Australia that works specifically with, and on behalf of, families and friends of missing persons. The FFMPU's primary aim is to co-ordinate support services

across NSW with a broad mandate including funding to non-government agencies, linking both government and non-government agencies through convening a quarterly Interagency Forum, raising community awareness and looking at the need for legislative, administrative and/or social reform.

Internationally there is a lack of professional counsellors with experience in working with families of missing persons. There is also a dearth of academic literature to guide professionals in their practice. *'It's the Hope that Hurts – Best Practice in Counselling Models Relevant to Families and Friends of Missing Persons'* (FFMPU, 2000) is a starting point for developing standards to effectively meet the counselling needs of families and friends.

There exist no specific international fora in which services working with and on behalf of families of missing children, young people or adults can come together to share resources, information and strategies. The International Committee of the Red Cross is convening a conference for those working with and on behalf of families of people missing due to armed or internal conflict. This will be a wonderful opportunity for relevant agencies and individuals to come together to progress issues.

The information gathered on the Churchill Fellowship will assist in the discussion and development of strategies to further enhance service delivery to families and friends of missing persons. For example, the use of online support groups to ameliorate the difficulties and costs inherent in distance, the use of a small expert team that is specifically trained to deliver counselling services, the potential for a legal response website for service providers or families of missing persons and scope for the organisation of an international roundtable to bring together the disparate agencies in the arena.

Dissemination of the Churchill Fellowship Report will be facilitated through both written and verbal presentations to relevant professional and community bodies. Membership of both state and national committees will further enhance opportunities for dissemination.

The Churchill Fellowship not only provided an opportunity to gather information, it also provided an avenue to establish relationships with agencies working in the arena. The latter, I believe, to be the most beneficial aspect of the Fellowship. As a member of this international network there is now the capacity to develop strategies and disseminate information across state, national and international borders. This can only lead to increased service provision to families and friends of missing persons across community and government agencies.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of missing persons is a global phenomenon. It impacts on a significant number of people. The reasons people go missing are diverse; war, natural disaster, acts of terrorism, conflicts within significant relationships, abuse and maltreatment within significant relationships, diminished mental capacity, abduction and foul play. Some people voluntarily become a member of the 'missing' population, whilst others through no control of their own or their families', become part of this large population. It is a phenomenon that impacts on people regardless of age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, and educational or professional background.

In 2001 in the United States approximately 200,000 cases of missing adults, i.e. over the age of 18, were reported to the Police authorities (www.nmco.org). This does not include the number of children reported as missing; nor do these numbers include those that are reported to non-police tracing agencies, for example the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army or International Social Service.

In the United Kingdom it is estimated that 250,000 people are reported missing each year (*National Missing Persons Helpline – A Case for Support*, undated).

In Australia alone 30,000 people are reported missing each year (Henderson & Henderson, 1998). For each person reported missing, it is estimated that 12 people are impacted, i.e. immediate and extended family members, friends, work colleagues and community members. Therefore, in any one-year in Australia, 360,000 people feel the effect of the missing persons phenomenon. This equates to a rate of 1.61 per 1,000 of the Australian population (Henderson & Henderson, 1998; p5)

Within existing resources and large caseloads, there is little scope for search agencies in Australia to provide support services to families and friends during the period of missing.

For some family and friends the experience lasts a few hours, and these hours are traumatic. For others the experience spans decades. Some families speak of the 'continuous grieving' when a loved one is missing; that there is no resolution, only uncertainty (Jacques, 1997). As a society we are not conditioned to live with uncertainty, we expect and demand answers to all questions. Yet many people live with uncertainty on a daily basis regarding the well-being and whereabouts of someone they love.

Having a relative missing results in emotional, physical and financial impacts on family members, friends and extended community members. (Henderson & Henderson, 1998).

The cost to the Australian community of 'locating missing persons and the associated immediate health and employment-related costs' was estimated at A\$72 million, this figure not including the costs associated with the 'long-term impacts on families and friends of the missing person' (Henderson & Henderson, 1998; pg.35)

If the person is missing overseas this raises additional issues for families and friends. For example, the cost of international travel, areas where the person went missing may be inaccessible, and for some the issue of personal safety in returning to an area of continuing conflict or war (Abbott & Jacques, 1997).

As the length of the missing period extends beyond the initial crisis period, community support can diminish for families and friends. This can also be exacerbated when the person is missing due to war or internal conflict (Jacques, 1997).

To the above figures has to be added the 'unreported' component within the missing person population. This population includes youth who are forced out of their homes and people who live in licenced or unlicensed boarding houses in large cities who are separated from their families. These 'missing' persons remain the unreported segment of the population.

If a person is located and wishes to re-initiate contact with their family, reunification presents challenges to all family members and the family unit. Support and professional assistance may be helpful to facilitate reintegration of the family unit.

MAIN BODY

Section 1 - Services relating to missing children and young people

Nancy Dube, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer/Worldwide, International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children and Jennifer Penta, Project Manager, International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children provided me with information, resources and facilitated meetings with staff from the National Centre for Missing & Exploited Children.

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, USA

Background

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) was established in 1984. It was co-founded by John Walsh, the father of 6 year-old Adam Walsh who was abducted in 1981. “NCMEC serves as a focal point in providing assistance to parents, children, law enforcement, schools, and the community in recovering missing children and raising public awareness about ways to help prevent child abduction, molestation, and sexual exploitation.” (The Charles B Wang International Children’s Building, 1999; pg 2)

Legislation

The NCMEC is a private, not-for-profit organisation that works with the United States Department of Justice and is legislated through Congress (*Missing Children's Assistance Act*, 1984).

The Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) sits within the Office of Justice Programs of the United States Department of Justice. The Child Protection Division of the OJJDP ‘provides leadership and funding to promote effective policies and procedures to address the problems of missing and exploited children, abused or neglected children, and children exposed to domestic or community violence.’ (*Resource Guide on International Parental Kidnapping*, 2002; inside cover)

The Missing Children’ Assistance Act requires the OJJDP to:

- establish and operate a national, toll-free telephone line to receive reports of sightings of children and to provide information on reuniting the child and the child's custodian
- establish and operate a national clearinghouse of information about missing and exploited children
- provide technical assistance to law enforcement agencies, non-profit agencies, and families to help locate and recover missing children
- conduct a national incidence study to find out the numbers of missing children
- publish summaries of the latest research on missing children

The NCMEC has a co-operative agreement with the OJJDP to provide most of the above functions. OJJDP publishes the national summaries of programs related to missing and exploited children.

Service Provision

Every day 2,200 children are reported missing in the United States. “The NCMEC has worked on more than 72,000 cases of missing and exploited children and helped to recover more than 47,000 children, and raised its recovery rate from 60 percent in the 1980’s to 91 percent today...” (The Charles B. Wang International Children’s Building, NCMEC, 1999; pg 2). The NCMEC will continue to investigate and publicise a case if the person is an adult as long as the person went missing when a child and the case remains open with law enforcement.

The NCMEC fulfils its primary aim via the provision of a hotline, training to law enforcement and other professionals, production and distribution of publications, and working with law enforcement on missing children cases.

A call to the hotline initiates case management staff who

- assist in filing missing persons reports
- verify information
- disseminate information
- offer resources and information
- co-ordinate and distribute publications
- work in conjunction with Interpol, the United States Department of State, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the United States Customs Service
- on behalf of the United States Department of State handle cases arising from the Hague Convention on International Child Abduction.

(www.missingkids.com/html/casemanagement)

Today NCMEC has developed into a 125-person organization. It has a strong partnership approach with both the government and the private sector. It has worked with European leaders to establish a centre in Brussels, Child Focus, which operates along the lines of NCMEC.

The International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children, USA

Background

“Based on the incredible amount of international interest in NCMEC, the NCMEC Board of Directors decided to incorporate the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC). In 1999, ICMEC was founded by Ernie Allen, President and CEO of NCMEC, and Lady Meyer, wife of the British Ambassador to the United States...The mission of ICMEC is to create and lead a coordinated, global response to the problems of international child abduction and child exploitation, particularly child sexual exploitation.” (www.icmec.org)

Functions

The primary goals of the ICMEC are to:

- “(1) Establish a global resource to find missing children and prevent child sexual exploitation;
- (2) Create National Centers and affiliates worldwide;
- (3) Build an international network to disseminate images and information on missing and exploited children;
- (4) Provide training to law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, legal professionals, non-governmental organizations and government officials, and
- (5) Advocate changes in laws, treaties and systems to protect children worldwide.” (Overview of the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children, ICMEC, undated)

In achieving these aims the ICMEC has “been a voice for change, not a direct service organization. We have promoted changes in law and policy, built infrastructure, engaged in training, and begun to build a global alliance of sister organizations focused on our issue.” (Presidents Report, 2002: pg 1).

The ICMEC is looking at incorporating within their primary roles a direct, case-based role in the search for missing children that involve crossing national borders.

US Department of Justice – Office of Justice Programs - The Office for Victims of Crime, USA

Barbara Johnson, Program Manager – Terrorism & International Victims Unit and Bradley Mitchell, Program Specialist - Terrorism and International Victims Unit, provided me with information and resources.

The Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) is a component of the Office of Justice Programs which also includes...the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency prevention.” (*Office for Victims of Crime – Fiscal year 2002 – Discretionary Program Plan*, inside cover)

The Mission of OVC states that it “is committed to enhancing the nation’s capacity to assist crime victims and to providing leadership in changing attitudes, policies, and practices to promote justice and *healing for all victims of crime.*” (*Mission and Goals of the Office for Victims of Crime*, Fact Sheet)

OVC provides funding to the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children through its Discretionary Program. The *Abducted Children Reunification Program* provides parents whose children have been taken illegally across US borders by a spouse or biological parent with funds for travel, translation and counselling assistance. (*Office for Victims of Crime – Fiscal Year 2002 – Discretionary Program Plan*, page 48-49).

The Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services, USA

Margo Hirsch, Executive Director, provided me with information and resources.

Background

“The Coalition was formed in the early 1970’s by youth workers and advocates who saw the need for a service system designed to work with youth who had run away from home, but who had committed no crime and didn’t need mental health or other treatment services.” (*Empire State Coalition* brochure, undated)

Functions

The Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services is a non-government, not-for-profit agency whose membership comprises community-based youth services and individuals working on behalf of runaway, homeless and street youth. The Coalition’s consistent message is that young persons have equal rights.

The Empire State Coalition works with ten other organisations across the country, which provide similar services to the runaway and homeless youth field. The Executive Directors of these organisations meet twice a year formally with a three day retreat annually to work on national projects. Acknowledgement of regional differences has meant that the Coalitions work on national projects rather than the development of a national plan.

Service provision

“As an advocacy organization, the Empire State Coalition is a collective voice to:

- promote voluntary, strength-based services for youth and their families;
- advocate for resources in every community;
- share ideas and expertise;
- disseminate information;
- network a full range of quality services; and
- develop program models to meet new and changing needs.”

(*wise beyond our years*, Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services, 2001; pg. 1)

The Coalition’s methods in realizing their mission are:

- training
- technical assistance to member agencies
- convening conferences, and
- advocacy.

The State of New York’s Division of Criminal Justice Services’ Summary of 1999 Activity on the Missing Children Register, identifies that 91% of the youth reported missing are runaways. “An additional 1,560 were not classified and may in fact have been runaways (which would bring the percentage up to 97%)”

(*wise beyond our years*, Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services, 2001; pg. 14).

The report goes on further to say that “Reports of missing children do not count youth who have been forced out of their homes, or who are homeless.” (pg 14)

The United States Government has mandated that if a young person is in a residential program the family have the right to know that they are safe and well. They do not, however, have the right to be provided with details regarding the young person’s whereabouts. Under New York law the young person can legally stay in that program for 30 days. However if the young person wants to stay another 30 days in the residential program he or she has to have parental authority. If a young person is staying in a non-residential service then there is no government mandate regarding the young person’s right to stay for the period of 30 days or an additional 30 days with parental consent. The length of stay may differ from state to state.

The national switchboard acts as a relay of messages between youth and their families (www.nrscrisisline.org).

Training

The training provided by the Coalition is agency specific. It is based on the belief that the training must be provided within the philosophy and values of the agency providing the services. The Coalition provides training in legal issues six times a year. They also provide a legal response website where service providers can ask questions with a legal practitioner responding within a 2 day period. The Coalition has produced a legal issues document (Legal Questions and Answers, December 1997)

Training is also provided in family reunification to service providers by a counsellor with substantial experience in working with young people and their families.

Her Majesty’s Government - UK

The Social Exclusion Unit

The Social Exclusion Unit was set up in 1997 to help improve Government action ‘to reduce social exclusion by producing ‘joined-up solutions to joined-up problems. Social exclusion is a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown. (www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk)

The SEU works primarily on specific projects, chosen following consultation with Ministers and interested groups. The SEU covers England only and liaises with

Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland devolved administrations, which implement their own strategies regarding social exclusion.

One of the projects currently underway within the SEU is related to young runaways. SEU produced a consultation report in March 2001, which highlighted the need for the following priorities to be considered:

- “Prevent young people from running away in the first place
- Ensure that young people who do run away are safe
- Make sure that young runaways get the help they need when they return, which will deal with the issues that caused them to run away in the first place and will stop them running away again.
- Consider how to co-ordinate and join up responsibilities to young runaways at the national and local level.”

Ongoing consultation is occurring with government and non-government partners, including parents and young people. The project team is currently developing the final report recommendations and working with government and non-government agencies to develop solutions to specific issues.
(www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk)

Section 2 – Support services for families of missing children and young people

Team HOPE, USA

Patty Wetterling and Abby Potash, co-founders and workers with Team HOPE, provided me with information.

Background

Team HOPE was founded by parents of missing children who felt that there was more that they could do for other parents.

Team HOPE is an agency of volunteers who have, or have had, a child missing. Volunteers are nominated by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, State Missing Children Clearing Houses, missing persons nonprofit organizations, law enforcement, and existing Team HOPE volunteers. There are currently approximately 70 volunteers with Team HOPE.

Funding commenced in 1998 and is provided by the US Department of Justice through the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The funds support one full-time and one part-time worker. The funding is primarily used for salaries and associated costs for volunteers to attend training, which is provided twice a year in March and October.

Service Provision

The National Centre for Missing & Exploited Children provides the referrals to Team HOPE. The agency receives approximately 20-40 referrals per day. The parents of runaways form the majority of the referrals received. Team HOPE staff make the initial intake call to the family member/s. 'The families are invariably pleased to hear from us.'

If the family wants to continue contact with Team HOPE post the initial call they are matched with a volunteer. The criteria for matching include age of missing child, family personality types for example whether the family has a religious faith and by geographic location. The latter is important because of the different state laws that can make a difference to information provided.

Team HOPE staff then calls the volunteer to clarify whether a referral is appropriate. The volunteer has the choice whether to take the referral. If the volunteer accepts the referrals, they in effect become the case manager for that individual or family.

To ensure the safety of the volunteers their phone numbers are not given to the family. Rather, if the family wants to call the volunteer at any time they call the 1800 number and a message is passed to the volunteer often via email. The volunteer will then contact the family.

Team HOPE operates a telephone system that means that volunteers bear no cost in relation to providing support to families. The system also provides Team HOPE with statistical information.

Due to the workload staff have recently implemented a standard letter to go to families letting them know that they will be in touch and providing the 1800 number.

Training

Team HOPE provides a comprehensive training program for volunteers. Throughout the 2.5 day training course prospective volunteers are screened. Team HOPE is acutely aware that volunteers need to have reached a level of emotional healing and maturity in order to be able to support other families.

The content of the training is also currently under review with the potential for the content to alter with a sharper focus on the specifics of providing support to families rather than the overview of legislation and other legally based content. The psychologist employed by the NCMEC provides training to the volunteers in listening skills.

Young people speaking of their experiences who have been reunited with their families also provide reunification training. One of the issues the young people emphasise is that reunification with other family members is a much easier

transition if the family members have led a quality life during the ‘missing period’. Their experience indicates that reunification is much harder if family members have been unable to reach a level of emotional maturity during the period of missing. (www.takeroot.org)

Counselling

Team HOPE staff and volunteers provide support from those ‘who have walked in their shoes’. One of the founders of Team HOPE found that the families of personnel missing in action were able to understand and provide her with the necessary assistance when her child went missing.

Team HOPE does not provide counselling but will often refer families to professional assistance. They reinforce the message that seeking professional assistance is not a weakness but rather a strength.

Staff feels that families accessing a counsellor who is sensitive to and able to provide appropriate counselling services to families of missing children is currently ad hoc. Staff felt that training professional bodies about missing persons issues would be of definite benefit to families of missing children. Also that it would be beneficial to establish a small expert team who could provide counselling services to families whilst also training other relevant professionals.

Future plans

A long-term plan is to have a state-by-state operation in the United States. Team HOPE is currently working towards regionalisation of the agency with regional captains providing some of the administrative work required. Training of victim’s advocates in missing persons issues is also being developed. Victim’s Advocates are attached to courts within the United States.

Section 3 - Services relating to missing children, young people and adults

The American Red Cross, USA

Mary Meigs, International Social Services Associate - International Services and Kathleen Martin, Associate – Tracing, Americas, Europe and the Middle East provided me with information regarding the activities of the American Red Cross as well as information regarding the Missing Project being initiated by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Background

The American Red Cross was modelled after the International Red Cross. The American Association of the Red Cross was established in Washington, D.C., on May 21, 1881 and created to serve America in peace and in war, during times of disaster and national calamity. (www.redcross.org)

Service Provision

As a national society which is part of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the American Red Cross provides tracing services to family members where separation has occurred due to war, internal conflict, refugee movement or natural disaster. Annually the American Red Cross handles between one and two thousand new requests to trace people who are separated from their families.

The American Red Cross established the Holocaust and War Victims Tracing and Information Center, a national clearinghouse for United States residents seeking the fates of loved ones missing since World War II and its aftermath. The Center has helped provide information on the fate of thousands of family members missing since the end of World War II.' (www.redcross.org.services/intl/tracing)

The Nation's Missing Children Organization and Center for Missing Adults, USA

The library facilities of the Catholic University in Washington provided me with information regarding legislation recently passed to enable the establishment of a Center for Missing Adults. I contacted Kym Pasqualini from the Nation's Missing Children Organization and Center for Missing Adults who provided me with information.

Background

In 2001 there were approximately 200,000 reports filed with law enforcement for missing persons over the age of 18 in the United States. The Nation's Missing Children Organization and Center for Missing Adults (NMCO) is a publicly supported not for profit organization founded in 1994 by Kym Pasqualini.

Service Provision

NMCO works on cases of endangered missing persons, unsolved homicides and unidentified persons. (www.nmco.org)

In November 2000 The United States 106th Congress passed legislation "to authorize the Attorney General to provide grants for organizations to find missing adults". This Act is called *Kristen's Act*. This Act authorizes the Attorney General to provide funding to organisations to assist in locating missing adults. It legislates the provision of specific services to aid in that location.

In July 2002 NMCO was successful in being awarded funding that had been legislated through *Kristen's Act*. This funding is administered by the United States Department of Justice and is provided to create a Center for Missing Adults, a national clearinghouse for cases involving missing adults. This will assist law enforcement in obtaining information about cases. The Center will develop a curriculum and provide training for law enforcement agencies. It will provide support services for family members and employers. Services will be

provided through a toll free hotline, a website and a resource database for nationwide referral and advocacy services.

NMCO's primary focus is on missing adult cases where violence or foul play is suspected. However the agency has expanded its criteria to include any missing persons case reported to law enforcement.

The NMCO has been liaising closely with NCMEC and is basing its structure on the work of NCMEC within the missing children's arena.

NMCO currently provides support services for families primarily through putting families in touch with one another. NMCO believes that there is an inherent understanding 'as they have walked in one another's shoes'. This is provided through an online support network, which is a secure site that families can only access through invitation and with the use of a password. Online provision ameliorates the tyranny of distance that can, and does, hamper the delivery of support services.

National Missing Persons Helpline, UK

Mike Platt facilitated my meeting with the founders of the National Missing Persons Helpline, Janet Newman OBE and Mary Asprey OBE. I also met with Dave Flanagan who is conducting the Child in Care Project, Stuart Rae-Brown - Case Manager & European Liaison as well as other staff members of the agency.

Background

It is estimated that around 250,000 people are reported missing each year in the United Kingdom.

Co-founders, and sisters, Janet Newman and Mary Asprey, established the National Missing Persons Helpline (NMPH) in 1992. The NMPH has approximately 100 unpaid volunteers and a staff of around 57 salaried employees from diverse professional backgrounds. The NMPH registers approximately 20 new cases per day and annually receives around 100,000 calls for help and advice. (National Missing Persons Helpline – Case for Support, undated)

'The profile of missing persons reported to the NMPH is more diverse than the population reported to the police. As well as receiving reports of missing persons who are also reported to the police, the NMPH also undertakes social tracing to reunite people who have lost contact over the years.' (Lost from View – Executive Summary, University of York, pg 3)

The NMPH has a current caseload of approximately 1500 cases. Approximately 40% of these fall into the vulnerable category with the remaining 60% falling into the non-vulnerable category. A 'vulnerable case' is defined as a:

- person under 16 years of age

- person over 65 years of age
- person with mental health issues
- person with issues of addiction

The definition can be reviewed dependent upon prevailing social issues. For example middle-aged people facing work and financial pressures were included in the 'vulnerable' category because of the increased numbers of reports from this demographic.

Service Provision

The NMPH aims are to provide support, practical advice and assistance to 'missing people' as well as to the relatives of the 'missing person'. "NMPH helps to make contact with missing people, particularly those who are vulnerable, reuniting them with family members, if that is their wish." (National Missing Persons Helpline – Case for Support, undated)

The NMPH meets its aim by the following service provision:

- 24 hour national telephone hotline
- Publicity and community education particularly in relation to those defined as vulnerable
- Message Home Helpline which provides a confidential message relay service between 'missing persons' and their families
- Identification and Reconstruction Department which can aid in identification through conducting searches of its database, clay skull reconstruction on skeletal remains and age enhancing photographs.

A Case Manager from NMPH is assigned to each case and this staff member will provide information and support to family members, particularly those within the vulnerable category as these cases are prioritised. Support provided to families includes ongoing dialogue regarding where the case is up to, a facilitation point between families and the media if necessary, particularly on high profile cases, and practical advice and referral if necessary.

Families of missing persons are not involved in the direct service provision of the NMPH. Rather they are involved in fundraising efforts to ensure that NMPH continues to meet its aims and provide its distinct services to missing persons and their relatives.

The NMPH, in partnership with the University of York, and funded by the Nuffield Foundation has recently produced 'Lost from View – A study of missing persons in the UK'. This is the first study in the United Kingdom, which has surveyed both young persons and adults who have been reported as missing.

The NMPH is working on a pilot 'Child in Care Project' which is funded by the Department of Health. Young people, who go missing from substitute care, in particular from residential care, account for a disproportionate number of reports

to the police (Abrahams and Mungall, 1992; Wade and Biehal, 1998 in Lost from View – a study of missing persons in the UK - Executive Summary, pg 3). The pilot project is being conducted with six social services sites across the United Kingdom. The project finished its first year of operation in September 2002 with the report due at the end of the two-year pilot period.

Counselling

The NMPH does not provide counselling. It is generally felt by staff that counselling is not required during the 'period of missing'. Rather, families require practical advice and assistance with professional assistance more likely to be required at the resolution of that period whether this results in the discovery of a body or bones or the missing person is located.

If it is felt by the relevant Case Manager or by the Message Home Helpline staff that additional professional support may be required then NMPH staff will refer to The Samaritans, which provides confidential, emotional support.

Support for missing people

'Our follow up survey showed that both adults and young people tended to rely more heavily on support from friends than they did from professionals or family members. A few approached social work/advice agencies or medical services for help, but overall, over one third did not seek help at all...Both adults and young people expressed a need for someone independent to talk to while they were missing and for help in finding shelter. Adults attempting to establish their lives elsewhere would also have liked help with finding permanent accommodation and employment and in resolving their financial problems.' (Lost from View – a study of missing persons in the UK - Executive Summary, pg 9-10)

The Lost from View – Executive Summary highlighted issues for policy and practice arising from the findings of the report. Three of these identified issues are:

- “Families of missing have continuing needs for advice, practical help and emotional support, including access to professional counseling in some cases.
- Where families lose touch, agencies that undertake social tracing tend to be highly valued by them. Services that facilitate direct or indirect communication between missing people and their families can be successful in mediating return or reconciliation. At the very least, a simple 'safe and well' message can alleviate the worst fears of families.
- Missing persons schemes are being developed to provide follow up support to young runaways once they have returned. It may also be the case that many adults and their families could benefit from an opportunity to explore underlying issues that may have prompted an absence, including opportunities for counseling and mediation.” (pg 9-11).

Safe Horizon, USA

Whilst in New York I became aware of the agencies working with families of people missing as a result of the attacks on the World Trade Centre in September 2000. I contacted Safe Horizon and spoke to a telephone support worker who provided me with contact details for Deborah Shime from the agency Head Office regarding service provision.

Safe Horizon is a not for profit organisation and is one of a number of agencies providing support to families of those killed or missing as a result of the attacks which occurred on September 11, 2000. The caseload of Safe Horizon is currently 250 families. There are approximately 3,000 families affected by the attack on September 11. A case is kept open as long as the client has ongoing needs.

Safe Horizon's service provision consists of:

- Support line which provides information and referral
- Grants of financial assistance
- Outreach services i.e. referrals to other agencies
- Counselling – this can be ongoing as long as is required by the individual or the family; can be individually based or family counselling is provided.

There is no distinction made by Safe Horizon as to whether the person has been confirmed dead or listed as missing.

Staff will refer to counsellors within accredited or recognized clinics, hospitals or other agencies but not to private counsellors. Safe Horizon also provides in-house counsellors if required.

A case manager is assigned to each family and works with the family through the differing stages of resolution, for example when a body or body part is found.

British Red Cross Society, UK

Nev Jefferies, Head of the International Welfare Department provided me with information and resources.

Background

The British Red Cross Society (BRCS) was formed in July 1870, following the outbreak of war between France and Prussia. A public meeting was held in London and a resolution passed that "a National Society be formed in this country for aiding sick and wounded soldiers in time of war and that the said Society be formed upon the Rules laid down by the Geneva Convention of 1864....The British Red Cross Society is part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the world's largest independent humanitarian organisation, with over 105 million members. All Red Cross and Red Crescent activities have one central

purpose: to prevent and alleviate human suffering, without discrimination, and to protect human life and dignity.” (www.redcross.org.uk)

Service Provision

Like its sister national society, the American Red Cross, BRCS provides tracing services for families separated by war, internal conflict, natural disaster or refugee movements. “When armed conflict or other disasters strike, communications often break down. Families may become separated and in these situations the British Red Cross works with the International Committee of the Red Cross and other Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies world-wide to restore and maintain contact between families.

The International Red Cross Message service may use radio, telephone or a traditional paper form to relay family news, often the first news that someone is alive. International tracing activities are carried out to establish the whereabouts, or fate, of missing family members - from those affected by the Second World War to those separated by current conflicts.

The British Red Cross International Tracing and Red Cross Message service can help with:

- Delivering family news internationally when normal means of communication have broken down because of war, natural or man-made disasters. This is done by using a Red Cross Message (RCM).
- Tracing family members internationally, where the family has been separated and has lost contact because of war, natural or man-made disasters. These may be recent conflict situations or relate to past conflicts, such as the Second World War.
- Handling applications for travel assistance from refugees in the UK for their close family members to reunite with them in the UK.
- Helping to obtain confirmation of detention, where the person has been visited by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) overseas.

British Red Cross services to restore family links are confidential and provided free of charge.” (www.redcross.org.uk)

Victims Support, Republic of Ireland

Lillian McGovern is the Chief Executive Officer of Victims Support, based in Dublin, Republic of Ireland. Lillian provided me with information on the newly established service.

Approximately 2,500 missing persons cases are reported to the police authorities every year in Ireland.

Victims Support is the national voluntary organisation providing emotional and practical assistance to victims of crime in Ireland. The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform fund the agency. In 2002, the Department, in recognising the need for support services for families and friends of missing persons approached Victims Support to undertake this work.

Victims Support has established a hotline to provide emotional support and information to the families and friends of missing persons. Working in close co-operation with the Missing Persons' Bureau of a Garda Siocana (the Irish Police Force), Victims Support launched the National Missing Persons Helpline in October 2002 on a pilot basis for one year.

It is envisaged that after one year the needs of families and friends of missing persons will be identified and a stand-alone service will emerge offering a range of services, information, support, help with tracing and a platform for those who may have gone missing to make contact with their families.

Initially one staff member has been employed to provide the above services.

Her Majesty's Government, UK

The Home Office

Simon Hayes, Police Leadership and Powers Unit provided me with information regarding the initiative of the Home Office as well as a contact within the Social Exclusion Unit.

“The Home Office is the Government department responsible for internal affairs in England and Wales. The purpose of the Home office is to work with individuals and communities to build a safe, just and tolerant society enhancing opportunities for all and in which rights and responsibilities go hand in hand, and the protection and security of the public are maintained and enhanced.”
(www.homeoffice.gov.uk)

The Home Office comprises many agencies, one of these being the Police Leaderships and Powers Unit. “The purpose of the Unit is to:

- Develop policy relating to Police Leadership, and Powers and Procedures, and their relations with the public
- Develop policy on the training of Police Officers and support staff
- Develop policies on Police Complaints and Discipline and to combat Police corruption
- Sponsor the PCA
- Liaise with NPT on its objectives and business plan”
(www.homeoffice.gov.uk)

The Police Leadership & Powers Unit (PLPU) has been working with the National Missing Persons Helpline and the Chief Constables across England and Wales to develop a holistic service delivery unit. The Home Office has provided two years funding. The priority for the first year is the development of a protocol between NMPH and the Police Constabularies. The second year will be looking at the establishment of the service delivery unit. This unit will look broadly at issues related to missing persons including support, counselling and legal issues.

International Social Service, United Kingdom & Switzerland

Peter Fry - Director, Lesley Austen – Tracing & Family Contact Worker and Anjali Prabhu – Intercountry Social Worker from ISS in the United Kingdom provided me with information and resources as well as contact details for the General Secretariat based in Geneva.

I contacted and met with Damien Ngabonziza - General Secretary, who provided me with additional information and resources.

Background

“International Social Service (ISS) was founded in 1924 in response to the migration of displaced persons after World War 1. This kind of migration and the subsequent need to co-ordinate activities across several countries on behalf of families separated by national borders was the catalyst for ISS to establish its international social work network. It has continued to develop its global network as more recent international conflicts, problems within nations and the human mobility have given rise to new situations for separated families with which ISS has been asked for help. ISS has had a presence in Australia since the late 1930's and was officially founded in 1955.” (www.home.vicnet.au/issaust)

‘International Social Service is a world-wide network of social work agencies that aim at helping individuals and families with social problems resulting from voluntary or forced migration.’ ISS is comprised of twenty Branches and national Affiliated Bureauz with the General Secretariat based in Geneva. (ISS Manual, 2000)

Service Provision

In the ISS Manual (2000) forty-seven types of problems that are referred to ISS are identified. Family reunification, re-establishment of contact and tracing are three of these forty-seven identified problems.

In the United Kingdom, ISS has a section devoted to tracing work. The Tracing Section specialises in tracing birth parents on behalf of adult adoptees and also adult adoptees on behalf of birth parents in an inter country context. ISS is also involved in tracing and re-establishing contact in family situations where children are separated from parents at an early age due to complex family issues, again in situations where there are two countries involved.

The aim of ISS is:

- ‘To assist those who, as a result of voluntary or forced migration or other social problems of an international character, have to overcome personal or family difficulties;
- To study from an international standpoint the conditions and consequences of migration in relation to individual and family life, and to make recommendations or undertake any other appropriate action;
- To contribute to the prevention of social problems linked to migration or intercountry mobility;
- To inform professionals and the public of the needs of migrant individuals and families;
- To develop and maintain an international network of national bodies to meet the needs of individuals and families who require the services of ISS.’

(www.iss.ssi.org)

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Switzerland

Thierry Schreyer, Deputy Head – Central Tracing Agency and Protection Division provided me with information, resources and contacts in other relevant agencies.

Background

“The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was founded nearly a century and a half ago. It seeks to preserve a measure of humanity in the midst of war. Its guiding principle is that even in war there are limits: limits on how warfare is conducted and limits on how combatants behave. The set of rules that were established with this in mind and endorsed by nearly every nation in the world is known as international humanitarian law, of which the Geneva Conventions are the bedrock.” (www.icrc.org)

The International Committee of the Red Cross is impartial, neutral and independent and is the origin of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement with approximately 170 national societies worldwide.

Service Provision

“The ICRC protects and assists the civilian and military victims of armed conflicts and internal disturbances on a strictly neutral and impartial basis. Its tasks include:

- visiting prisoners of war and civilian detainees;
- searching for missing persons;
- transmitting messages between family members separated by conflict;
- reuniting dispersed families;

- providing food, water and medical assistance to civilians without access to these basic necessities;
- spreading knowledge of international humanitarian law and contributing to its development and respect.” (www.icrc.org)

Central Tracing Agency

The Central Tracing Agency has responsibility to provide the following services as part of the overall operations of the ICRC:

- “collecting information on victims with a view to helping them (e.g. locating prisoners and informing families of the whereabouts of their relatives);
- restoring and maintaining contact between family members separated by conflict;
- organizing, coordinating and facilitating the reunification of dispersed families;
- making approaches to the authorities on behalf of families to ascertain the whereabouts of missing relatives;
- issuing travel documents to enable people without identity papers to reach host countries or to return to their countries of origin;
- keeping track of individual victims in certain categories, including those deprived of their liberty, and helping to protect them.” (www.icrc.org)

‘The Missing – end the silence’ Project

The ICRC has initiated a major project, ‘The Missing – end the silence’. The aim of the project is to raise awareness among “governments, the military, international and national organizations – including the worldwide Red Cross and Red Crescent network – and the general public about the tragedy of people unaccounted for as a result of armed conflict or internal violence and about the anguish of their families.” (*The Missing* brochure, ICRC; undated)

The project is divided into two stages. The first is a series of workshops, which bring together government and non-government experts. The workshops will identify best practice and draft recommendations for operational implementation.

The second stage will be an international conference convened by the ICRC in February 2003. The results of the first stage will be provided to conference participants. One of the key questions being asked of the project is ‘How can we help the families of the missing and provide for their specific material, legal and psychological needs?’ (*The Missing*, ICRC brochure; undated)

Three external studies have also been commissioned. The International Centre for Transitional Justice in New York has just completed ‘Overcoming the tensions between family needs and judicial procedures’. The aim of the study was to identify how to balance the need of families of missing persons for information

with the objectives of ‘achieving reconciliation and respecting legal obligations’. The study identified that families require information, accountability and acknowledgement and that a ‘plurality of mechanisms’ are required to fulfil the needs of families of missing persons.

The National Missing Persons Unit (NMPU) - Australia

‘The NMPU's mission is to coordinate and promote a national integrated approach to reduce the incidence and impact of missing persons.

Each year approximately 30,000 people are reported missing, half are aged under 18. While 99.5% are located, most within hours, the impact on families, friends and the missing people themselves, is devastating.

The NMPU delivers an integrated approach nationally to reduce the incidence and impact of missing persons and informs senior law-enforcement, government and community decision-makers about the issues relating to missing persons.

The NMPU provides the required over-arching direction, coordination and facilitation of missing person issues. The NMPU works in partnership with law enforcement, Commonwealth and state government agencies, tracing organisations and the community. A coordinated approach means that each agency's role is clearly articulated. This prevents duplication of effort and leads to effective referral, informed decision-making and better utilisation of resources for all agencies.

The NMPU facilitates a national coordinated approach to missing persons through:

- Secretariat support to the national committees: National Advisory Committee on Missing Persons and Police Consultative Group on Missing Persons and other committees/workshops as required
- Public awareness and marketing of critical issues in missing persons, including national coordination of campaigns such as National Missing Persons Week
- Provision of investigative support and specialist support provided through Commonwealth and international agency liaison.

The NMPU identifies requirements, facilitates discussion and resolution through, wherever possible, building capacity within existing agencies, encouraging them to respond to the missing person dimension.’ (www.missingpersons.info.au)

Section 4 - Support services for families of missing children, young people and adults

The Samaritans, UK

Staff of the National Missing Persons Helpline provided me with contact details for the Samaritans. I spoke with Vanessa Evans who provided me with information.

The Samaritans' provide confidential, emotional support, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair.

'The Samaritans' values are based on the belief that everyone has a right to explore difficult feelings, that being listened to, in confidence and accepted without prejudice, can alleviate despair and suicidal feelings and that everyone has a right to make fundamental decisions about their own life, including the decision to die by suicide.'www.samaritans.org.uk

The Samaritans provide short term support services. They do not provide counselling but rather a 'listening ear'. If additional professional assistance is required a suggestion is made that the caller contact their General Practitioner for an appropriate referral. This would only occur once the Samaritan volunteer has tried to explore emotional feelings with the caller.

The Families & Friends of Missing Persons Unit (FFMPU) – Australia

Background

The NSW Government established the FFMPU in September 2000 in response to the identified needs of families and friends of missing persons. It was established under an amendment to the *Victims Rights Act 1996* to co-ordinate support services to the families and friends of missing persons in NSW. The FFMPU is a discrete function of the Victims of Crime Bureau within the NSW Attorney General's Department.

Functions

The FFMPU has a broad mandate with its primary aim being to co-ordinate support services to families and friends of missing persons across NSW. It achieves this aim through

- Funding to non-government agencies to enhance service delivery
- Convening and maintaining an Interagency Forum across government and non-government agencies
- Developing relevant policies
- Promoting administrative, legislative and social reform
- Producing high quality products
- Liaising with the National Missing Persons Unit

Mission Australia, a non-government agency, is funded to provide a telephone information, referral, support and counselling service. This service has been operational for fifteen months. Staff and volunteers have been specifically trained in issues relating to missing persons and the impact on families and friends.

In partnership with the Hunter Institute of Mental Health, the FFMPU has produced *'It's the Hope that Hurts – Best Practice in Counselling Models Relevant to Families and Friends of Missing Persons'* (2000). This report provides guidance on developing standards for the delivery of effective counselling services to families and friends of missing persons.

A pilot counsellor position is to be recruited for a period of one year. It is envisaged that along with providing counselling services to families and friends of missing persons this position will assist in identifying a best practice framework for counselling families and friends of missing persons.

A Legal Issues Map has recently been developed to assist families through the myriad legal issues inherent in having a family member missing.
(www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vs/vs.nsf/pages/missing_persons)

Section 5 - Family Reunification

The Rachel Foundation, USA

Staff of National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) provided me with the contact details of Pamela and Bob Hoch who founded The Rachel Foundation. The Rachel Foundation is the primary family reunification referral agency of NCMEC. Pamela and Bob provided me with information and resources.

Background

“The Rachel Foundation is a not-for-profit organization whose primary purpose is to aid abducted and alienated children through reintegration and research.” (The Rachel Foundation brochure, 2000). The primary aim of the Foundation is to provide reintegration of returned abducted children and children who have been severely alienated from a parent with their families.

(<http://www.rachelfoundation.org>)

Service provision

The Rachel Foundation has developed a four step program of family reintegration. The goal is for abducted or alienated children to be given an opportunity to develop a loving and supportive relationship with their parents where possible.

A program can vary from a matter of days to weeks dependent on the circumstances. “The Foundation is independent and neutral. The foundation does not advocate or take sides.” (Rachel Programs Admission Protocols, 2002; pg 1)

Online support group

An online support group is provided for parents and facilitated by two volunteers. Parents use a password to access the online support and use a pseudonym for reasons of confidentiality. The facilitator reviews and edits messages as they come in and then sends onto the group. It is not a message from one parent to another but from one parent to the group.

The support group emphasises ‘security, anonymity, respect, trust and caring, these parents are coming together from all parts of the United states (and the world) to participate in the healing comforts of camaraderie. The group maintains strict rules of membership, allowing every participant the safest possible environment; a place to offer listen, learn and laugh.” (Rachel News, April 2002)

Section 6 - Video and web-based technologies

The Rachel Foundation and the Nation’s Missing Children Organization and Center for Missing Adults provide online support groups as a primary support mechanism. These support groups are accessed via use of a password and have mechanisms in place to ensure confidentiality.

The Office of Victims of Crime (OVC) was involved in directly providing information and services to the families of those killed in the Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland in 1988. Two hundred and seventy people from twenty-one countries were killed. Video and web-based technologies were used to provide services due to the disparate geographical distance. The trial of two defendants began in May 2000 in the Netherlands. “...(f)amily members were able to travel to the trial and/or watch its proceedings via closed-circuit television at various remote sites in the United States and the United Kingdom. In addition, OVC conducted pre-trial and post-trial briefings in the United States and the United Kingdom.

OVC set up an international toll-free telephone line that provided updated information regarding the trial and linked family members to available assistance. OVC provided a grant to the Syracuse University College of Law to create and

maintain a secure Web site to provide victim's families with information about and analysis of the criminal trial. The Web site contained background information on the case, summaries of daily trial proceedings, legal analysis, information on victim services, and an interactive component to facilitate questions and answers to family members. OVC also contracted the Research Planning, Inc., to handle logistical arrangements for victim travel, prepare a trial information guide for families, and help OVC document and assess the various services provided to victims." *OVC Fact Sheet – Terrorism and International Victims Unit*, OVC; January 2002)

The FFMPU is currently working with other units within the NSW Attorney General's Department to look at the feasibility of video and web-based technologies to deliver services to people living in regional, rural and remote NSW.

CONCLUSION

Heightened attention is now being paid to families and friends of missing children, youth and adults. This is happening at a state, national and international level. The agencies that work within the arena are dedicated to ensuring that families and friends are provided with the information, support and assistance they require in order to cope with the uncertainty inherent in having someone they love missing.

Whilst this heightened awareness is to be celebrated, we are still a long way from realising a position where the needs of families and friends of missing persons are comprehensively met. The Churchill Fellowship has provided an avenue for entry to an international network, which is keen to share information and resources. It has created an opportunity for ongoing dialogue regarding issues facing families and friends of missing persons which can only lead in the long term to improved service delivery.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Families & Friends of Missing Persons Unit, in consultation and partnership with families and friends of missing persons, public and private sector agencies, and drawing on the expertise of our international partners, facilitate the following.

1. The use on online support groups to ameliorate the difficulties and costs inherent in distance.
2. Training for professional bodies in relation to missing persons issues as identified in *It's the Hope That Hurt – Best Practice in Counselling Models Relevant to Families & Friends of Missing Persons*.
3. Scope the development of a small expert team that is specifically trained to deliver counselling services.
4. Investigate the potential for a legal response website for service providers and families and friends of missing persons.
5. Develop and facilitate research and relevant projects regarding the identified issues relating to the provision of support to families and friends of missing persons.
6. Research and identify best practice models in family reunification, particularly for youth and their families.
7. Organise training in family reunion and legal issues to relevant professional and community agencies.
8. Scope the potential for an international roundtable to bring together the agencies in the families and friends of missing persons arena.

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