

MEDIA RELEASE – Embargoed until 00:01 on 24 August

## **McCanns Support Charities' Call on Home Office to Improve Information on Child Abduction**

Kate and Gerry McCann have joined two leading UK charities involved in missing people and child abductions in calling on the Home Office to improve the quality of information on abducted children.

Missing People (as part of its initiative 'Get Together Week') and PACT (Parents and Abducted Children Together) have written to Tony McNulty MP (Minister of State at the Home Office) to highlight the serious limitations in the department's annual statistical series *Crime in England and Wales*.

The charities point out that as the Home Office statistics are the only source of publicly available information on child abduction, they have two major weaknesses. First, they fail to make the vital distinction between different types of child abduction, e.g. by strangers or parents, or attempted or completed abductions. Second, in cases where abductions lead to more serious crimes such as sexual assault or murder, only the latter are recorded.

Paul Tuohy, Chief Executive of Missing People said: "The count of child abduction offences currently tells us nothing about the number of abductions of children which result in more serious offences, such as assault, sexual assault and murder. Missing People and PACT are asking the Home Office to attach a 'flag of abduction' to indicate where the taking of a child has led to assault or murder."

"More information is needed to reassure people about the nature of child abduction offences and the actual risk (especially from strangers) involved, particularly when the Home Office says it is committed to 'help people feel safer in their homes and local communities'."

Lady Catherine Meyer, founder and Chief Executive of PACT, said: "How can we possibly protect our children, and devise effective policies to tackle child abduction, if we do not know the scale and nature of the problem? In a country like Britain which professes to put children's welfare at the forefront of its concerns, this is simply not good enough. PACT has been campaigning on this issue for over two years. We are now very pleased to be joining forces with Missing People."

Lending their support, Kate and Gerry McCann said: "Over the past 112 days we have learnt so much about child abduction and missing children. We believe that it is important that records covering child abduction offences in England and Wales need to be clear and easy to understand so the public can know the true scale of child abduction offences. We would like to see the UK lead the way in Europe in making information about child abductions accessible."

For more information about Missing People visit [www.missingpeople.org.uk](http://www.missingpeople.org.uk) and PACT at [www.pact-online.org](http://www.pact-online.org). The official Bring Madeleine Home site is [www.bringmadeleinehome.com](http://www.bringmadeleinehome.com), where details of the 'Don't You Forget About Me' YouTube partnership can also be found.

ENDS.

### **Media Enquiries**

Missing People - Communications team – [media@missingpeople.org.uk](mailto:media@missingpeople.org.uk) / 020 8392 4513 or 07872600178.

PACT – [support@pact-online.org](mailto:support@pact-online.org) / 020 7627 3699

### **Notes to Editor:**

Home Office statistics (*Crime in England and Wales*) show a fall of 24% in the number of child abduction offences recorded in 2006/07 from the previous year. However, the statistics provide no indication of whether this decrease has occurred across all types of child abduction.

The last report to offer a complete break down, a one-off Home Office study<sup>ii</sup>, found that 47% of child abduction offences recorded by the police in 2002/03 were stranger attempts, 9% were completed stranger abductions, 23% were parental and 22% were 'other'.

PACT's *'Every Five Minutes'* (2005) examined the data currently available to try and establish how many children go missing every year in the UK and why.

### **Missing People (registered Charity No. 1020419)**

Missing People (formerly National Missing Persons Helpline) is the UK's only charity that works with young runaways, missing and unidentified people, their families and others who care for them. As well as actively searching for missing people and supporting those who are trying to find them, the charity offers three other services: Runaway Helpline (for young runaways), Message Home (for missing adults) and Identification (helping to resolve cases of unidentified people).

Key facts:

- Our work directly finds 10 missing people every week
- An estimated 210,000 reports of missing people are made to UK police forces each year. Around two-thirds of these concern young people under the age of 18.

For more information visit [www.missingpeople.org.uk](http://www.missingpeople.org.uk)

To buy an official "Missing People" yellow ribbon email your name followed by your full postal address to [ribbon@missingpeople.org.uk](mailto:ribbon@missingpeople.org.uk).

Ribbons cost £1 each, min. order of 5 via email plus £1.50 p&p.

### **Current projects**

- Get Together Week 20-26 August 2007

The charity will use the week to showcase a survey revealing the nation's 'get together' habits, exciting new additions to our website including our Missing Map and Missing People TV and to encourage the public to organise a 'get together' event with family and friends to raise money for Missing People.

- Conference 'Missing People – Beyond the National Protocol'

Missing People is organising this event specifically for police delegates. The aim is to showcase the working partnership and multi-agency approach between the charity, police and other agencies involved with missing people. Hilton Hotel, Blackpool, 20–21 September 2007. For more details please contact Andrea Bennett on 020 8392 4515 or [andrea.b@missingpeople.org.uk](mailto:andrea.b@missingpeople.org.uk)

The charity supports the work of police and social services and signed a National Protocol Agreement (NPA) with every UK police force on the 21 December 2006

### **PACT (UK registered Charity No. 1081904)**

PACT is an international, non-profit organisation, registered in the USA and the UK. It was founded in 2000 by Lady Meyer, wife of the then British Ambassador to the United States. Its patrons are Cherie Blair, wife of the former British Prime Minister, and Laura Bush, First Lady of the United States.

PACT's initial mission was to fight parental child abduction across frontiers by raising awareness of this growing, but little-known, problem and by advocating solutions. Parental child abduction remains at the forefront of PACT's concerns. But it has broadened its mission to include the location and retrieval of all missing children.

For more information visit [www.pact-online.org](http://www.pact-online.org)

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<sup>i</sup> Objective 1 of the Home Office

<sup>ii</sup> Research Findings paper 225 <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/r225.pdf>