



YOUR RIGHTS AFTER MURDER AND MANSLAUGHTER



A Guide to the Victims' Code of Practice for Bereaved Families



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A Guide to the Victims' Code for Bereaved Families

The traumatic death of a loved one is one of the most devastating experiences anyone can face. Alongside overwhelming grief and trauma, you may suddenly find yourself involved in a complex criminal justice process that can feel confusing and intimidating.

The **Victims' Code** sets out the rights you are entitled to receive from criminal justice agencies in England and Wales.

If you need help with understanding this leaflet or you have any questions, our specially trained team of advisors can provide individual, confidential assistance. You can ring our helpline on 0121472 2912 or text VCOP to us on 07342888570 or email us at info@samm.org.uk asking for help with VCOP

This document applies to adults over the age of 18. For children under 18 please refer to The Victims Code of Practice for Children

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d80bc2c40f0b61cfe01b562/u18-victims-code-leaflet.pdf>

This leaflet explains your rights and where you can access support. It is available in several different languages, including English, Gujarati, Polish, Kurdish, Punjabi, Urdu and Arabic.



What Is the Victims' Code?

The Victims' Code is a statutory guide that outlines the minimum standard of service victims should receive from organisations such as:

- ✓ The Police
- ✓ Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)
- ✓ HM Courts and Tribunals Service
- ✓ Probation Service
- ✓ Youth Offending Teams
- ✓ Prison Service
- ✓ The Parole Board

They are responsible for making sure victims receive the rights set out in the Victims' Code and should ensure victims are treated fairly, respectfully and compassionately throughout the criminal justice process.

You do not need to have reported the crime to access your rights under the Victims' Code.



Who Is Entitled to Enhanced Rights?

Bereaved people who are considered vulnerable or intimidated or who have been persistently targeted can receive enhanced services. This can include a referral to a specialist support service, being contacted sooner after key decisions and access to special measures.

Your 12 Rights Under the Victims' Code

1. The right to understand and be understood

You have the right to:

- ✓ Receive information in a way you can understand.
- ✓ Have your communication needs considered.
- ✓ Request information in accessible formats if required.
- ✓ Ask questions if you do not understand information you have been given.

2. The right to have details recorded without unjustified delay

You have the right to have details of the crime recorded by the police as soon as possible after the incident. If you are required to provide a witness statement or be interviewed, you have the right to be provided with additional support to assist you through this process.

3. The right to be provided with Information when reporting the crime

You have the right to receive written confirmation when reporting a crime, to be provided with information about the criminal justice process and to be told about services for victims. This might include services where you can meet with the suspect or offender, which is known as Restorative Justice.

The police may appoint a Family Liaison Officer to act as a link between investigators and a bereaved family, providing information and support throughout the investigation.





4. The right to be referred to support services and have support services tailored to your needs

You have the right to be offered a referral to support services, including specialist services for bereaved people. You have the right to contact them directly and to have your needs assessed so services and support can be tailored to your needs. Please speak to one of our specially trained advisors to ensure you are offered the right help and support for you. Details of how to contact us are available at the end of the leaflet.

5. The right to be provided with information about compensation


Where eligible you have the right to be told about how to claim compensation, for your loss (including psychological injury). You can find out more about claiming compensation through the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme. For further information and guidance please speak to one of our specially trained advisors. Details of how to contact us are available at the end of the leaflet.

6. The right to receive information about the investigation and prosecution

You have the right to be kept informed about updates and significant developments of the case when important decisions are taken. You also have the right to be told about certain stages of the criminal justice process and to ask for decisions to be looked at again by the relevant organisation.

In certain circumstances, bereaved families can request a meeting with the CPS to discuss decisions relating to the prosecution.

If the CPS decides not to bring charges or discontinues a prosecution, you may be eligible to request a review of that decision under the Victims Right to Review.



7. The right to make a victim personal statement

A Victim Personal Statement (VPS) allows you to explain how your bereavement has affected you and your family. You have the right to tell the court how you have been impacted by your bereavement. Your statement may be considered during sentencing and other criminal justice decisions, such as at a parole hearing.

You can request to read your statement aloud in court or have it read on your behalf.



8. The right to be given information about the trial, trial process and your role as a witness

You have the right to receive information about court dates, location and the outcome of any hearing.

If you need to give evidence you can get help before, during and after the trial. For further information we can explain who can help you prepare for the following:

- ✓ Pre-trial support court
- ✓ Your rights during a trial and what to expect
- ✓ What happens at court
- ✓ Giving evidence
- ✓ Special measures
- ✓ Verdicts and sentencing
- ✓ Claiming expenses
- ✓ Post trial support.



9. The right to be given information about the outcome of the case and any appeals

You have the right to be told the outcome of the case and sentence. If the offender appeals, you should be told the outcome.

For further information on how a bereaved person can appeal a sentence against an offender please speak to one of our specially trained advisors. There is a strict time limit on when you can apply.

10. The right to be paid expenses and have property returned

You have the right to claim expenses as a witness for giving evidence in court. If property was taken as evidence, you may be entitled to get it back.


11. The right to be given information about the offender following conviction

You have the right to join the Victim Contact Scheme, if eligible. The Scheme gives you annual updates on the offenders' sentence, including when they're being considered for release.

12. The right to make a complaint about your rights not being met

If you believe an organisation has failed to meet its obligations under the Victims' Code, you have the right to make a complaint.

Most criminal justice organisations allow you to write, email or phone them to make a complaint. For further details please visit the relevant organisations website and refer to their feedback and complaints procedure. For further information and guidance please speak to one of our specially trained advisors. Details of how to contact us are available at the end of this leaflet.



Contacting SAMM for help and guidance

If you need help with understanding this document or you have any questions about the code, our specially trained team of advisors can provide individual, confidential assistance. You can ring our helpline on **0121 472 2912** or text **VCOP** to us on **07342 888570** or email us at info@samm.org.uk asking for help with the Victims Code of Practice (VCOP).

How SAMM National Can Help

Support After Murder and Manslaughter (SAMM National) provides specialist peer support to people bereaved by homicide.

Our services include:

- National telephone support
- Peer support from trained volunteers with lived experience
- Online support groups
- Practical information and guidance
- Trauma support and education
- Signposting to specialist services
- Support throughout criminal justice processes

We understand the unique challenges faced by families bereaved through murder and manslaughter because many of our volunteers have lived through similar experiences themselves.

If you would like to find out more about our support services please don't hesitate to contact us.

Contact SAMM National

Support After Murder and Manslaughter (SAMM National)

Helpline: 0121 472 2912 / 07342 888570

Email: info@samm.org.uk

Website: www.samm.org.uk



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