

Support After Murder & Manslaughter submission to the Leveson Enquiry

(SAMM National – www.samm.org.uk)

This submission is given on behalf of SAMM National by Rose Dixon Chief Executive Officer.

SAMM National offers peer support to families and friends who have lost a loved one to homicide (whether through murder, manslaughter or terrorism) We are also closely involved in training agencies who come into contact with traumatically bereaved people such as police, Crown Prosecution Service, Probation Service, etc. We offer understanding and support as well as signposting to other relevant services. We work very closely with Victim Support and other support agencies. All of our specially trained volunteers have been bereaved through homicide so can offer specialised peer support in what is a devastating loss for traumatised people. SAMM can offer support that is very different to that offered by Victim Support and other agencies.

Over the years many of our 3,500 members have expressed their fear to me that either they or their murdered loved ones phone may have been hacked. Some members have informed the police of their concerns but they have been reassured that this would not happen!

The current enquiry is causing a lot of concern and anxiety to many of our members as they see that their fears seem to have been real and not the imagination of bereaved and traumatised people as they had previously been told. Sadly many of our members are not involved in high profile cases so obtaining information and attention from the police and other authorities is not possible. After a murder/manslaughter bereaved people are very vulnerable and can be exposed to very intrusive media attention. Families have to deal with multiple post mortems being carried out on the body of their loved ones and waiting for the body to be released for funeral (frequently families wait for many months and sometime even a year or more for their funeral) and they tell me having journalists camping on their doorstep at this difficult time is very distressing. When journalists are asked politely to leave the family in peace many have replied **“My editor says I have to stay here till I get a story so if you want me to go away then talk to me and give me a story!”**

On occasions if the bereaved family can't cope with talking to the press, they will then go to the family of the accused in order to get a story (any story will do, and they don't seem to care if they get the facts right or not). Journalists will also sometimes go to neighbours, schools and churches in order to find someone who will give them a photo of the victim that they can then publish without the permission of the next of kin.

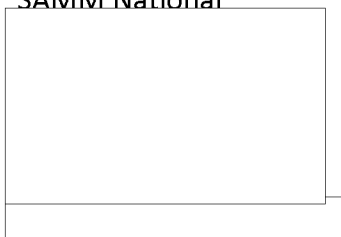
I would like to suggest that after losing a loved one in this traumatic and horrendous way the bereaved family should be treated with respect by the media instead of being further traumatised by their insensitive behaviour.

SAMM National fully support the submission made to the Leveson Inquiry by our Northern Ireland Branch and would welcome your findings and the possibility of change in the future for these very vulnerable families.

Rose Dixon

CEO

SAMM National



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