

Dame Vera Baird QC
Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales

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Mary Williams OBE
Chief Executive
Sudden
c/o Brake
PO Box 548
Huddersfield
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Dear Mary,

Sudden Death Bereavement Charter

I support the need for appropriate measures to be in place to ensure swift access to support services for all those who are suddenly bereaved. To lose a loved one suddenly is devastating for family members and it is vital they have access to professionals who can offer both practical and emotional help.

Clearly my link to this issue is my role in championing victims of crime who find themselves in this position. A lack of timely support can have long term consequences for the mental and physical health of those left behind.

The charter raises many pertinent points about the existing barriers to victims accessing the support they need, including equity of access to support services, the need for robust data on unexpected deaths, and the importance of ongoing support throughout a criminal trial.

We must ensure that there is equal access to support services for any victim who needs them, and those who are vulnerable, with protected characteristics, barriers of communication or insecure immigration status.

The lack of data on victims limits the ability of support services to deliver the best care to victims of crime and to the bereaved, and the Government should address this.

For bereaved victims of crime, there can be the extra ordeal of going through the criminal justice process, having to liaise with a range of criminal justice agencies and absorb huge amounts of information to keep track of what is happening. This can be difficult for any of us and is more so for someone who is grieving and may be suffering from trauma. This is why I am calling for these victims to have access to their own advisor who can support them throughout the process.

I am also calling for legislation to require all practitioners in the justice system to undertake trauma informed training to assist them in engaging with traumatised victims and for victims to have access to free legal representation at inquests.

By launching your charter, you are raising public awareness on the need to help these families and I am pleased to support you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V Baird', with a stylized, cursive script.

Dame Vera Baird QC
Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales