

# A Guide For Parents Who Lost Children Through Murder

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## **A Guide To Parents Who Lost Their Children Through Murder**

A mother myself with lived experience, I lost my son who was murdered 12<sup>th</sup> September 2013 the day that was to change my life forever. A devastating tragedy that impacted not only the immediate family but an entire community. I had no idea what to expect or where to start. This booklet is to give parents an outline hopefully taking them through the various steps along with contacts for help and support. Even though the outline maybe similar everyone will have their own personal experiences. My deepest condolences to the families who are going through this traumatic experience at this time. Life will never be the same

### **The Journey Begins**

- The Call or Visit – told of an incident
- Arriving to the scene of the incident
- Arriving to the hospital
- The Chaos

Some people may go to the scene where the incident happened and their child is in the mist of it all

Some might have to go direct to the hospital to be told the seriousness of the incident or to be told their child is dead

Whichever way it is traumatic

## **Different things that crossed my mind that you may also experience**

- Surreal
- In shock
- Emptiness
- Numbness
- Overwhelmed
- Its not happening to you
- How, What, Why
- Who would do this to my child?

### **Emotions –**

- Emotional roller coaster
- Sadness
- Confusion
- Hurt
- Anger
- Anxiety
- Grief

### **Stages**

- Initial Contact
- Identifying the Victim
- The Autopsy
- The Coroner's Inquest
- The Funeral/Cremation
- Investigation
- Meeting with the Legal Team
- The Trial
- The Impact statement by the family (victim)
- The media – They just want to sell a story so will put angles that will sell not always the facts of the case
- The After Mass
- Coping with life

Once a serious crime has been called in there are steps taken to investigate

### **7 Steps of a Crime Scene Investigation**

1. Identify Scene Dimensions. Locate the focal point of the scene. ...
2. Establish Security. Tape around the perimeter. ...
3. Create a Plan & Communicate. Determine the type of crime that occurred. ...
4. Conduct Primary Survey. Identify potential evidence. ...
5. Document and Process Scene. ...
6. Conduct Secondary Survey. ...
7. Record and Preserve Evidence.

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## The First Call or Visit from the police

### Identifying the victim

This happens with the presence of the Family Liaison Officer  
Visiting the mortuary – The place where they hold the body

### People involved

Introduction to professionals involved

**Homicide Detectives** - leading the investigation

### Family Liaison Officers

The primary purpose of a **Family Liaison Officer** (FLO) is that of an investigator. Their role is to gather evidence and information from the **family** to contribute to the investigation, preserve its integrity. They are usually appointed on the day of the incident

### Victim Support

Manage and facilitate the delivery of identified needs by providing information, practical and emotional support and advocacy where appropriate.

### Victim Liaison Officer (VLO)

The role of a VLO is to empower **victims** of crime and contribute to community safety by providing relevant information about Probation Supervised sentences to **victims** of crime.

**Forensic Pathologists** - Performs postmortems to understand the cause and manner of death. They may follow a case from a crime and give evidence.

**The Crown Court** – Murder trials will be carried out at a Crown Court.



### A Crown Court:

- Has a Jury - which decides if the defendant is guilty or not
- Has a Judge – Give direction to the jury and decides what Sentencing is appropriate

## The Jury

A Jury is a sworn body of people summoned to give an impartial verdict officially submitted to them by a court.

The role of the jury is to weigh up the evidence and decide what the true facts of the case are or what actually happened. The judge gives the direction to the jury on the relevant law, which the jury has to apply to the facts of the case in order to reach a verdict.

The jury selection will be made prior to the main trial.



## High Court Judge – Criminal Jurisdiction

High Court judges can hear the most serious and sensitive cases in the Crown Court (for example murder) and some sit with Appeal Court judges in the Criminal Division of the Court of Appeal.

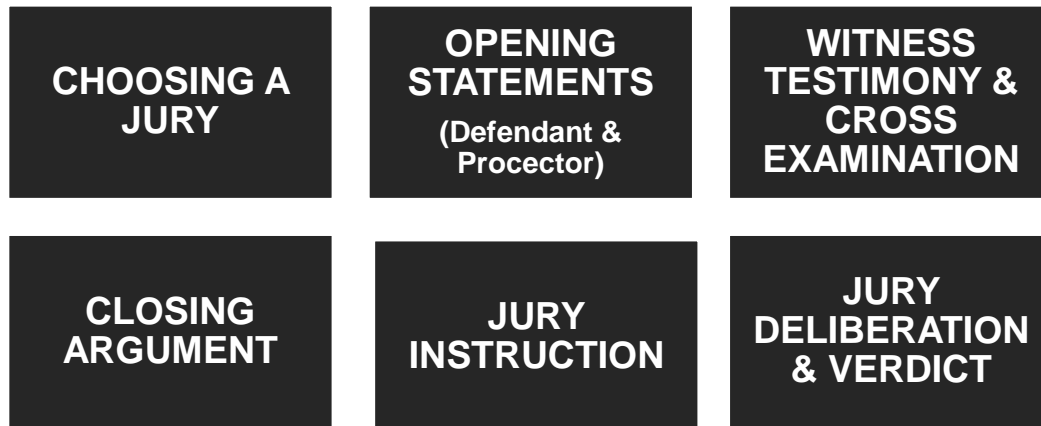
## Prosecution Team acting on behalf of The Crown

- **CPS** – Crown Prosecution Service (**CPS does not serve the interest**)
- **Prosecution Barrister** – Explains to the court what the defendant is accused of.
- **Prosecution Lawyers** – Responsible for presenting the case against those who committed the crime.

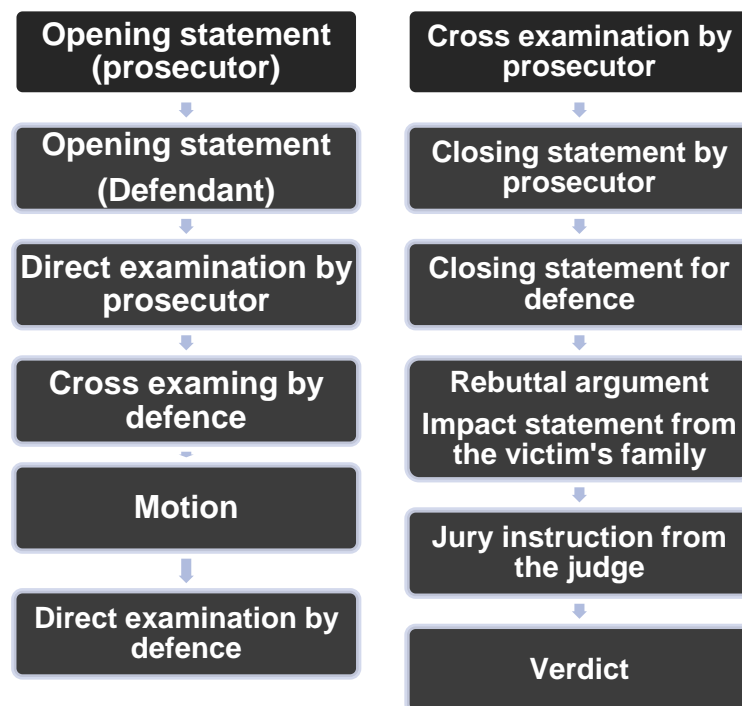
## Defendant Team acting on behalf of the perpetrator/s

- **Barristers** - The **Defence Barrister** represents the person accused of the crime. He/she points out to the jury what they think is wrong with the prosecution's evidence.
- **Defendant Lawyers** - The person who is accused of a crime and is Being tried.
- **Court Clerk** - Sits at the front of the court and prepares the laptops/screens that are used to present evidence during the trial. They read the formal charges to the court and take oaths from members of the jury. He/she also make notes during the trial.

## What a criminal trial may consist of



### Steps of the trial:



## **The Trial**

Once the trial has started the judge ensures that all parties involved are given the opportunity for their case to be presented and considered as fully and fairly as possible. The judge plays an active role during the trial, controlling the way the case is conducted in accordance with relevant law and practice.

During the trial you will hear all the accounts leading up to the death of the victim. The prosecution team will address the jury presenting facts and evidence to prove beyond doubt that the perpetrator acted with intent with the view to get a guilty outcome of murder or depending on the evidence and intent manslaughter.

On the other hand the defendant's lawyer will likewise work towards convincing the jury that either the defendant is not guilty or (if there was overwhelming evidence that the defendant was involved in the act) will try to prove mitigating circumstances, or act of self-defence.

It will not be easy to sit in a court room and listen to the last hours of your child's life along with the infliction of the act carried out that caused the death. The defendant's lawyer will do his/her best to paint a negative picture of the victim, character, personality, things they did whilst alive, who they associated with etc.

The cause of death will be read out, weapons used, CCTV & witness evidence from both parties.

## **Sentencing**

If the jury find the defendant guilty then the judge will decide on an appropriate sentence. The sentence will be influenced by a number of factors: principally the circumstances of the case, the impact that the crime has had on the victim, and relevant law especially guideline cases from the Court of Appeal. The judge will equally take into account the mitigation and any reports and references on the defendant.

Once the judge has considered all of these factors, the appropriate sentence or punishment be pronounced.

## **Personal support – Community, family and friends**

Find someone from your support group to confide in, try and get involved with community activities to help you cope. To help me manage I set up a charity in memory of my son. It helps me re direct the pain, helping others delivering intervention and prevention programs and supporting parents who are experiencing loss of their child as a result of murder.

**This process** is not easy you will not have time to grieve whilst fighting for justice so make sure you have family support or someone you can lean on. This is a long hard process, sometimes you do not always get answers or find an end result.

### **The impact**

- It can put a strain on your family relationships
- Pressure on your marriage
- Time out of your life
- You will find it difficult to focus on other things including family and work life
- Emotional/mental health well-being
- Affect family members

Once you have identified the victim (your child)

- Investigation continues
- Autopsy
- Pathologist Report
- Weapon report (gun/knife)
- Ongoing contact with family liaison officer
- If perpetrator is caught, then followed by a trial
- Facing the perpetrator/s in court
- If perpetrator is not caught ongoing investigation along with hunt for perpetrator

**Obstacles** – If you are not happy with the way the case is handled you can:

- Contact the Family Liaison Officer
- Request process for making a complaint
- Speak with CPS office

If you are still not happy you can:

- Contact your local Councilor/MP
- Seek advice from an independent lawyer
- Find an advocate – someone who can act on your behalf when it becomes too much for you
- If you are engaging a lawyer do your research find someone who is sympathetic to your cause. Make sure they explain the terms and conditions of payments clearly, ensure that they let you know exactly what the process is, and possible time duration
- If you need to engage a barrister, you need to know what the role of the barrister is and his/her fees.



## **Stages of Trauma –** (these stages may affect individuals in different ways and at different times)

### **Impact or Emergency Stage**

This could be known as the initial stage which occurs immediately after the traumatic event. He/she could be struggling to come to terms with the shock of what happened

### **Denial Stage**

Denial stage may not occur immediately, However, he/she may continue to experience strong feelings/emotions brought on by the memories of the traumatic event. They may attempt to avoid the emotion consciously or unconsciously.

### **Short – Term Recovery Stage**

During this phase immediate solutions seem to be addressed. He/she will attempt to adjust their everyday life and try and return to some sense of normality.

### **Long – Term Recovery Stage**

He/she will continue to deal with the after - effects of their trauma.

### **Support Contacts for Counsellors**

E: [admin@leicscounselling.co.uk](mailto:admin@leicscounselling.co.uk)

Tel: 0116 2558801

<http://www.leicestercounsellingcentre.co.uk>

<https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/help-and-support/get-help/support-near-you/east-midlands/leicestershire>

SAMM (Support After Murder & Manslaughter)

E: [info@samm.org.uk](mailto:info@samm.org.uk)

Tel: 0121 472 2912

M: 07342888570

<https://samm.org.uk/>

### **Victims First**

[support@victimfirst.pnn.gov.uk](mailto:support@victimfirst.pnn.gov.uk)

Tel: 0800 953 9595

<https://victimfirst.org/>

<http://www.knifecrimes.org/advice-support.html>

## **Coping with The Criminal Justice System**

Most victims have never been involved with the criminal justice system.

It is a normal to become angry and frustrated as he/she go through the processes.

It may seem the offender have more rights than the victim or the victim's family.

Families of the victims naturally want to see justice done to help them heal from that part of the trauma. Ask a family member or close friend to attend the trial/s with you. Ask the Family Liaison Officer/s questions about what to expect. Ask for a visit to the court prior the trial (if its post covid)

Try to remember that law enforcement officials want to get the crime solved and see justice served.

It takes time to prepare criminal cases, especially murder cases as the prosecutor needs to have accurate information and intelligence to prepare for the hearing. This includes evidence, witnesses, collection of data from any CCTV, reports from the coroner and pathology.

## **Negative Outcomes**

On occasions the defendant may get a not guilty or a hung jury verdict

A judge cannot force the jury to return a verdict. If the jury cannot agree on a verdict, either unanimously or by an acceptable majority, the whole jury will be discharged. A jury who are unable to agree on a verdict are known as a hung jury.

Many murder cases are never solved or do not result in convictions. Many cases also never get to trial or it could take years for conviction. Especially if the case is tied up in appeals and some cases may return to court for a retrial.

## Court Jargon

Jargon	Meaning
Accomplice	Someone who helps another person commit a crime
Affidavit	A sworn statement of truth
Allege	To claim a fact is true without or before proof is given
Allegation	Something that someone says happened
Beyond reasonable doubt	The standard that must be met by the jury in a criminal trial to convict the defendant
Continuance	Put off the trial until another time
Cross Examine	Questioning of a witness by prosecution or defendant barristers
Evidence	Proof that is legally presented at a trial with intention to convince a judge or jury of the alleged facts in relation to the case
Exhibit	A document or object that may be used as evidence during a trial
Interview	A meeting with the police or prosecutor
Juror	A person on the jury
Oath	A promise to tell the truth
Victim Impact Statement	A written statement presented to the court at the sentencing of the defendant

## Books that may help you manage trauma and stress

When The Body Says No by Gabor Mate

The Body Keeps Score by Bessel Van Der Kolk

## Useful contact links

### Bereavement support

Bereavement support of £2,500 lumpsum onetime payment from the government plus a monthly payment of £100 per month for 18 months, so a total of £4,300 by the govt through the DWP

This can be claimed either online applications or the faster route is just call the bereavement support line \*08007310139 or 08001214433\* option 3.

There is also a funeral expenses reimbursement program, that is up to 60% of the actual cost of funeral that you spend will be reimbursed for which you need all supporting documents including the invoice from funereal directors.

However, in order to qualify for this, either the deceased or their nearest kin (spouse, any of the surviving children etc) has to be on some kind of benefit such as universal credit, social housing, unemployment, child benefit and so on). To avail this, one needs to call \*08001214433 or 08009172222 or 08007310139\* and they will guide it through.

<https://www.gov.uk/funeral-payments/how-to-claim>

Bereavement Service helpline

Telephone: 0800 731 0469

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/publication/glossary>

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/east-midlands>

<https://www.cica-criminal-injuries.co.uk/> (Compensation claim for victims)

<https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/help-and-support/get-help/support-near-you/east-midlands/leicestershire>

Police complaints: <https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/tags/leicestershire-police>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/independent-police-complaint-commission>

<https://victimfirst.org>

<https://www.catch-22.org.uk/services/victim-first/>

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/local-services/east-midlands/leicestershire>

**MP's** <https://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council/elections-and-voting/mps/>

<http://www.cabinet.leicester.gov.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?GL=1&bcr=1>

AAA Foundation: [www.aaa4success.co.uk](http://www.aaa4success.co.uk) / E: [email.aaafoundation@gmail.com](mailto:email.aaafoundation@gmail.com)

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