

Written evidence submitted by the Josh Hanson Charitable Trust (VIC0039)

1. My name is Tracey Hanson, I am the CEO and Founder of The Josh Hanson Charitable Trust. The Trust was established as a direct response to death of my late son Josh whose life was taken from him an unprovoked knife attack on the 11th of October 2015. Our charity supports and advocates for children, young people, and adults who are victims of crime as they navigate the criminal justice system. I am a member of The London Victims Commissioners Victims Reference Group and have taken an active role in the development of the Code having contributed to consultations since 2015.

The Victims Voice

2. Firstly, I would like to express my concern over the way the invitation to respond to the call for evidence has been disseminated. Having spoken to our clients, services and charities who support victims, most had not been informed of it and the few that were aware of it had stumbled across it by chance on Twitter. A Victims Law will set out the support victims will receive from the police, Crown Prosecution Service, prisons, and the Probation Service. It will also ensure that Ministers will order the criminal justice inspectorates to undertake regular joint inspections on victims' issues and produce action plans to drive improvements. Therefore, this invitation should have been far more accessible to the millions of victims throughout the UK who alongside statutory agencies and charities like ours are an important voice for change. Moving forward I recommend that all agencies under the Code, charities and organisations working with and supporting victims are included in consultations and any call for evidence is disseminated by way of public accessibility via post, leaflet, local and national campaigns as well as social media which although has proven to be unreliable.

Co Victims

3. As a co-victim of my son's murder, I have long called for clarity that bereaved family members are recognised as co- victims throughout the criminal justice system process. We are the voice, eyes and ears of our deceased loved ones and we are also their representatives. It is therefore vital that we are kept informed throughout the process, given access to the CPS, the mortuary, and the courts and that we are included in all decision making every step of the way to avoid further trauma and re-victimisation. In crimes such as murder or manslaughter, the family member should be the focus of entitlements under the code. In the case where co-victims feel unable to play an active part in the process these rights, they should be allowed to appoint a nominated spokesperson such as a victim's advocate or family member. In all cases, appropriate safeguarding measures must be in place with the full cooperation and support of the police.

Unduly Lenient Sentence Scheme

4. After my son's murder trial in 2019 and after four years of fighting for justice, I left the court feeling deflated. I was further traumatised after not being given the relevant information by the CPS about my right to appeal. I have been campaigning for a change in the law to ensure that victims of crime are given the same information as offenders at the time of sentencing <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/02/08/mother-denied-right-appeal-sentence-sons-killer-applied-outside/>. It is the victim and co-victims right to appeal so I am calling for Josh's Law which will ensure all victims are informed about the right to appeal during the trial and at sentencing. The Victims Law must include this to afford victims the rights they are entitled to.

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