CHARITY URGES ROAD DEATH PROSECUTORS TO TAKE ON RECOMMENDATIONS AS INSPECTORS FIND VICTIMS ARE BEING FAILED

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Brake, the road safety charity, is calling on the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to significantly improve its performance in the prosecution of drivers who kill or seriously injure.

The call comes in response to a damning, joint report published today by the Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSI) and Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), which found widespread failings in both decision making and communication to victims' families on the part of the CPS.

The quality of CPS decision making was found to be good in less than half of the cases analysed, and service to bereaved families was "in many cases poor and short of its own guidance" [1]. The findings echo the negative experiences of many bereaved and injured road crash victims supported directly by Brake through its helpline.

The report makes a number of recommendations for the CPS to "reinvigorate its approach" to road death and injury cases, including the need for specialist prosecutors, as is the case for rape and serious sexual assault offences. Brake is urging the CPS to implement these recommendations to their full extent, having failed to do so following the last HMCPSI review in 2008 [2].

The report also looked at the role of police investigators in these cases, who were found overall to be professional and thorough. Brake congratulates the police on their improved work, particularly those in the vital and sensitive role of family liaison officer. The charity, 20 years old this year, works with every police force across the UK to offer support to bereaved and injured road crash victims, and has played a leading role in training hundreds of police family liaison officers.

Julie Townsend, deputy chief executive, Brake, said:"Crown prosecutors and police investigators do difficult and hugely important jobs. It is vital they fulfil their roles as professionally and consistently as possible, to ensure devastated victims of road crime feel informed and supported, and that justice has been done. Brake has been at the forefront of supporting crash victims for many years, and we know that many are left feeling betrayed and distressed by their experiences of the justice system.

"We are very encouraged by the significant progress that has been made by police forces in liaising with road crash victims, and hope they will continue to improve and provide victims with a passionate and dedicated service. However, as is made painfully clear by this report, the service being provided by the CPS is inadequate, in terms of decision-making and communication with victims. The CPS needs to implement the HMCPSI recommendations as a matter of urgency."

Brake works closely with police forces and family liaisons officers across the UK to deliver essential support to bereaved and injured road crash victims. Brake's accredited helpline supports victims of more than 500 road death and serious injury cases a year, and Brake's packs are handed to families by police following every UK road death. Find out more at www.brake.org.uk/support.

Notes for editors

Brake

Brake is a national road safety charity that exists to stop the needless deaths and serious injuries that happen on roads every day, make streets and communities safer for everyone, and care for families bereaved and injured in road crashes. Brake promotes road safety awareness, safe and sustainable road use, and effective road safety policies. We do this through national campaigns, community education, services for road safety professionals and employers, and by coordinating the UK's flagship road safety event every November, Road Safety Week. Brake is a national, government-funded provider of support to families and individuals devastated by road death and serious injury, including through a helpline and support packs.

Brake was founded in the UK in 1995, and now has domestic operations in the UK and New Zealand, and works globally to promote action on road safety.

Road crashes are not accidents; they are devastating and preventable events, not chance mishaps. Calling them accidents undermines work to make roads safer, and can cause insult to families whose lives have been torn apart by needless casualties.

End notes

[1] Joint inspection of the investigation and prosecution of fatal road traffic incidents, HMCPSI & HMIC, 2015

[2] Second thematic review of Crown Prosecution Service decision-making, conduct and prosecution of road traffic offences involving fatalities, HMCPSI, 2008http://www.hmcpsi.gov.uk/documents/reports/THM/RTRF/RTO_thm_Nov08_rpt.pdf

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