



Long-term needs, long-term access? Major Crime recordkeeping and the information needs of individuals bereaved by homicide

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Abstract*Purpose*

The article presents research on the long-term information needs of homicide bereaved individuals in the context of record-keeping practice within Major Crime Units (MCU) in England. The research objectives were to: (1) Identify the long-term information needs of individuals bereaved by homicide; (2) Establish MCU officer perceptions on the provision of information to individuals bereaved by homicide; (3) Establish the current practice of MCU officers in managing and providing access to homicide records; and (4) Explore the capability of current recordkeeping practice to move beyond the use of homicide records for their primary 'policing' purpose.

Design/methodology/approach

The first objective was met through a literature review across policing, bereavement, death, victimology, criminology, records management and archival studies. The remaining objectives were met through a singular interview-based study with officers at the Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire MCU.

Findings

The findings indicate that the long-term information needs of homicide bereaved individuals are ill-served by the current police recordkeeping framework which provides them with little involvement in record-keeping decision-making and limited long-term access to the information required for sensemaking/adaption in a post-homicide world. In this context, the research demonstrates a long term need for: (1) information access; (2) support for access; (3) a direct and personalised information access service and (4) trauma-informed and victim/survivor centred practice in police recordkeeping contexts.

Originality

The research addresses a major gap across disciplinary research literature in its focus on the ways investigative information is disclosed by the police to the bereaved following case closure.

Keywords: Homicide, Bereavement, Records, Archives, Information, Access

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Introduction

In the year ending March 2022, a total of 696 homicides[1] were recorded in England and Wales (ONS, 2023).

For family members and relatives left in the wake of violent loss, the trauma of losing a loved one so suddenly, in such profound circumstances, will often combine with an additional loss of agency and control as criminal justice agencies step in to locate, charge and prosecute the perpetrator of an offence (Casey, 2011).

The complex experience of navigating a world post-homicide, alongside the additional trauma of an active homicide investigation, can give way to a unique and complex bereavement process for the homicide bereaved[2]; one that requires full recognition of the lasting impact of violent death and the long-term support needs that follow (Casey, 2011; Dunn *et al*, 2006). The long-term provision of information may be seen as one of the most essential of these needs, helping to provide a fuller understanding of what has happened and why (Malone, 2007). This need is unlikely to fade with the closure of a criminal case or successful outcome at court as the attempt to adapt to life post-homicide becomes a life-long struggle (Gekoski and Adler, 2013).

In the last 20 years, several initiatives have been introduced across the criminal justice system in an attempt to improve the delivery of information and support services for victims of crime[3]. Most notably, a dedicated Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (VCOP) was established by the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004, with its most substantial revision occurring in April 2021 (Ministry of Justice 2024). The Code sets out a minimum set of entitlements for victims of crime and bereaved individuals, including a minimum standard of information provision throughout criminal justice processes from key agencies. Under VCOP, matters relating to the criminal justice system and the on-going police investigation will be disseminated to bereaved families via a dedicated police Family Liaison Officer (FLO), a role intended to provide information and support to direct family members, though the primary function of this post remains investigative in nature (NPCC, 2020). Following the closure of a criminal case, FLOs will be required to 'exit' from bereaved families as part of a pre-planned strategy. Victims and bereaved families may then choose to receive additional information relating to sentencing arrangements and parole via a National Probation Service assigned Victim Liaison Officer through the optional Victim Contact Scheme (Ministry of Justice, 2024). While these provisions have often been lauded as part of wider 'victim-focused' agenda, the entitlements afforded to bereaved individuals under this guidance are not enforceable by law and are required as part of criminal justice processes only (APCC, 2019).

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3 The frustration with the extent and duration of information access provided under VCOP has been well noted
4 across victimology literature, particularly around the required 'exit' of a FLO from a bereaved family shortly
5 after sentencing (Casey, 2011; Dunn *et al*, 2006; Bradford, 2019). For some individuals, the disengagement of
6 the police service following a case outcome may occur at a time of intense need as emotional responses
7 previously put 'on hold' throughout an investigation begin to emerge post-trial (Malone 2007, p388). For others,
8 the absence of a direct link to the police service and a legal right to dedicated information provision may not
9 emerge as an issue until much later in life as events continue to be reflected upon (Armour, 2002; Casey, 2011;
10 Dunn *et al*, 2006; Bradford, 2019). In these times of need, bereaved individuals may have little choice but to
11 return to the police due to their initial evidence gathering role and their long-term obligation to retain
12 information for a 'policing purpose'[4]. As the police obligation to provide this information under VCOP ceases
13 to exist post-case closure, the right to receive this information is left to be assured by information rights
14 legislation only.

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16 Major Crime Unit (MCU) officers continue to perform a critical role in the provision of information for the
17 homicide bereaved as they continue to mediate access to investigative information long after a homicide case
18 has been closed and familial support withdrawn. However, the continuing role of the police service has been left
19 unacknowledged in the research literature.

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21 While the long-term information and support needs of the bereaved have been widely acknowledged in both
22 victimology and bereavement literature, little attention has been paid to how these needs may be fulfilled by the
23 police service through time (Stretesky *et al*, 2010). Where research has alluded to the provision of information
24 beyond the narrow scope of the criminal justice system, this has typically focussed on the optional sentencing
25 information available to the bereaved under the Victim Contact Scheme (Bradford, 2019; Malone, 2007; Casey,
26 2011). However, with this information being disseminated independently of the police by the National Probation
27 Service, there has been little research into the ways investigative information may be disclosed to the bereaved
28 following case closure.

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30 The central aim of the research presented here is to provide a clear understanding of current MCU record-
31 keeping practice and how this may inhibit, or support, the information access needs of the homicide bereaved in
32 the long-term. The objectives are to (1) Identify the long-term information needs of individuals bereaved by
33 homicide (2) Establish MCU officer perceptions on the provision of information to individuals bereaved by
34 homicide; (3) Establish the current practice of MCU officers in managing and providing access to homicide
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3 records; and (4) Explore the capability of current recordkeeping practice to move beyond the use of homicide
4 records for their primary 'policing' purpose.
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8 In providing a comprehensive understanding of the way homicide records are managed and perceived by police
9 practitioners, this research contributes to growing discussions and debates on traumatic records in archival
10 scholarship (Sexton *et al.*, 2023; Wright and Laurent, 2021). In focusing specifically on the use of records by
11 homicide bereaved individuals, the research has relevance for the conceptualisation of records work as grief
12 work (Douglas *et al.*, 2019) and the call for records managers and archivists to consider the ethical
13 responsibilities to the deceased and their archival traces, as well as the living who interact with them (Douglas *et*
14 *al.*, 2019). The research also contributes to the police commitment to evidence-based practice in seeking to
15 highlight the need to improve information access services for homicide bereaved individuals through time.
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24 **Methodology**

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26 The first research objective to identify the long-term information needs of individuals bereaved by homicide was
27 met through an in-depth literature review across policing, bereavement, death, victimology, criminology,
28 records management and archival studies. The remaining objectives were met through a singular interview-
29 based study with officers at the Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire Major Crime Unit
30 (BCHMCU)[5] conducted by the first author with ethical approval from [redacted] and the BCHMCU.
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37 BCHMCU is made up of two main teams, one based in Hertfordshire and the other in Cambridgeshire. The unit
38 itself comprises a number of specialist teams, including the Outside Enquiry Team (live investigation team),
39 Cold Case Unit (unsolved investigation team), Investigation Review Team, and Archiving Team. During the
40 course of business, each of these teams will generate and manage documents and exhibits relating to the
41 investigation of crime. Upon case closure, an officer will be responsible for archiving this material with the
42 MCU Archiving Team.
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50 The study consisted of four one-to-one semi-structured interviews, of 30-70 minutes, conducted on police
51 premises in August 2023. This was a purposive sample (Pickard, 2013), capturing individuals responsible for
52 recordkeeping duties across all four key areas of business within the unit -(Outside Enquiries, Cold Case,
53 Investigation Review and Archiving). Participants were selected using the first author's 'insider' knowledge of
54 departmental roles and responsibilities. This enabled individuals with in-depth knowledge and experience of
55 long-term information provision to be identified for inclusion.
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3 The interview data was coded and analysed according to Braun and Clarke's (2016) six stage approach to
4 thematic analysis. Interviewee names were pseudonymised using the codes CR1-4. These are used in the article
5 to differentiate between interviewee responses.
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10 It is important to draw attention to the 'insider' status of the first author as a current member of the police
11 service and the former archivist at B~~C~~HCMU. As an 'insider' seeking to challenge the operational culture of the
12 police service, the positioning for the first author may be accurately summed up by Meyerson and Scully's
13 (1995) notion of 'tempered radicalism', describing an individual at odds with the organisational status quo, who
14 is actively pursuing change and transformation.
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20 The research is based on a limited sample size within a singular case context. Whilst this does not lend itself to
21 generalizable results, the findings are directly useful for BCHMCU and are likely to be of use to other UK based
22 MCUs in providing greater insight into victim needs and current approaches to recordkeeping practice. The
23 findings also support the authors' advocacy for an overhaul of current police recordkeeping practice.
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28 To provide a broader contextual backdrop for the findings of the research, a brief overview on the management
29 of police information in England and Wales is provided ahead of presenting the research results under the four
30 research objectives.
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35 **Management of Police Information: A Brief Overview**

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38 Following the information sharing failures of the Soham murders in 2002, a new framework for managing
39 police information, APP MOPI ([Authorised Policing Practice, Management of Police Information](#))[6], was
40 introduced in 2005 (Gill, 2004). This guidance set out authorised professional practice in relation to information
41 recording, collection, evaluation and processes, as well as information sharing and assurance (College of
42 Policing, 2023). While APP MOPI helped to establish an overall framework for the management of police
43 information across forces in England and Wales, it predominately captured pre-existing requirements around the
44 handling of investigative material already legislated for under the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act
45 (CPIA) 1996 and Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984, alongside information rights established by
46 the Data Protection Act (DPA) 1998 and Freedom Of Information Act (FOIA) 2000 (College of Policing, 2023).
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56 APP MOPI's main contribution to change came in the form of a mandated process for Review, Retention and
57 Destruction of records, with a review schedule based on the severity of an offence committed by an offender.
58 For homicide related material, this schedule extended the obligation to retain for up to 100 years, with a
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3 requirement to manually review material every 10 years. In adopting an offender-centric approach to retention,
4 APP MOPI did not move beyond the evidential view of records established under law, rather the process of
5 appraising records for an investigative purpose was merely extended and newly articulated as retention for a
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9 'policing purpose'[4].

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11 To assist officers and staff in the review process, the National Retention Assessment Criteria (NRAC) was
12 established and mandated for use in reviewing material, providing a closed set of questions relating to the risk of
13 harm posed by an offender (College of Policing, 2023). In limiting retention decision-making to a strict set of
14 questions, the new NRAC automatically displaced the well-established National Decision Model as the main
15 framework for police decision-making, decentring the Policing Code of Ethics in the process. As a result, any
16 consideration of victim and community impact, which may have been captured under consideration of the Code,
17 was essentially rejected in favour of offender-management. This is reflected in the framing of the 'risk of harm'
18 within the NRAC template, where risk is considered to result from offender's actions only, rather than any
19 police related retention decision-making. In failing to acknowledge a purpose for records beyond policing, the
20 needs of victims and witnesses are noticeably absent from all Review, Retention and Destruction related
21 guidance. Where noted, the need for victim consideration is situated in the context of health and safety, with
22 only passing mention given to victim impact under record disposal following an offender's death (College of
23 Policing, 2023). By only acknowledging the needs of victims of crime in review processes once a policing
24 purpose has ceased, a traditional life-cycle approach to record-keeping is upheld.

39 **Identifying the Long-Term Information Needs of the Homicide Bereaved: A Literature Review**

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42 Within bereavement literature, homicide is typically regarded as a form of traumatic loss: a sudden and violent
43 mode of death characterised by a traumatic event (Currier *et al*, 2006). This 'synergy' of grief and trauma is
44 widely considered a catalyst for a protracted and complicated grieving process that does not conform to the
45 traditional stage model of grief - typically: disbelief, anger, yearning, depression-mourning and acceptance
46 (Rynearson and McCreery, 1993). In early studies, these complications were linked to higher rates of post-
47 traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety disorders amongst homicide bereaved individuals (Black *et al*,
48 1992; Thompson *et al*, 1998).

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51 Following a constructivist turn in bereavement research in the early 2000s, focus shifted from these
52 symptomology-based investigations towards studies that explored narrative-based perspectives and theories of
53 meaning re-construction (Neimeyer and Anderson, 2002). This placed a new emphasis on the self-narratives
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3 constructed by the bereaved post-loss and their role in helping an individual restore a meaningful personal
4 reality (Neimeyer *et al.*, 2002).
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8 To account for these differences, homicidal loss is frequently linked to atypical grief theories and the concept of
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10 'complicated grief', a form of bereavement marked by ongoing distress, severe and long-lasting emotions, and
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12 difficulties adjusting to life following loss (Neimeyer, 2006a,b; Gillies and Neimeyer, 2006; Prigerson *et al.*,
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14 1995, 1996).

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16 Neimeyer (2004a,b, 2006a,b) suggests that in the case of homicide, violent loss poses a direct challenge to an
17
18 individual's basic assumptions about the world as meaningful and positive. In examining the mechanisms
19 employed by the bereaved to address this traumatic disruption, bereavement academics frame sense-making as a
20 central activity for meaning re-construction In examining the mechanisms employed by the homicide bereaved
21 in adapting to life following violent loss, academics with a focus on bereavement frame sense-making as a
22 central activity for meaning re-construction (Armour, 2002a, 2002b; Neimeyer, 2002). According to Gilles and
23
24 Neimeyer (2006), sense-making is a means of restoring a sense of order, security and predictability following
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26 violent loss. From a narrative standpoint, sensemaking is crucial to assimilating loss into a cohesive self-
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28 narrative, offering bereaved individuals a sense of continuity in a post-homicide world (Neimeyer 2004a,b). In
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30 this view, the self-narrative is an overarching cognitive-affective-behavioural subject (Currier and Neimeyer,
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32 2007) which homicide individuals must revise to facilitate adaption into a dramatically altered world (Currier
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34 and Neimeyer, 2007).
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40 The importance of receiving information and support to help piece together this narrative has been highlighted
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42 across studies focused on traumatic loss (Amour 2002a,b; Dyregrov and Kristenson, 2020; Matthews *et al.*,
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44 2019; Ngo *et al.* 2020). In cases of homicide, Armour (2002b) notes that individuals will often seek access to a
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46 range of investigative information to assist them, including details on post-mortems, crime scenes and suspects.
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48 Mowll *et al.* (2017) and de Monnik (2019) also draw attention to the significance of police information,
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50 specifically scene photography and CCTV, which can act as an effective visual aid in helping to build a fuller
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52 picture of events. The right to self-determination in viewing this material can restore a sense of agency to the
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54 bereaved, while the act of seeing has been shown to alleviate long-term distress in some individuals (Mowell *et*
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56 *al.*, 2017; de Monnik, 2019). However, the traumatic nature of this material is more likely to result in a denial
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58 of access by homicide detectives as they seek to avoid further traumatising, inadvertently infantilising the
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60 homicide bereaved as a result (Dunn *et al.*, 2006 Bradford, 2019).

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3 These access issues draw attention to the interpersonal/interactive nature of the grieving process put forward by
4 Neimeyer *et al* (2014) in their social constructionist model of grief, demonstrating the way that bonds with the
5 deceased continue under the scrutiny of others, becoming contingent on their understanding and support. Recent
6 research from Bellet *et al* (2019) also indicates that social validation leads to more adaptive loss responses. This
7 view stands in stark contrast to the dominant Western conception of bereavement as a primarily internal process,
8 suggesting that meaning is constructed within a broader community of people concerned with a loss (Neimeyer,
9 2005; Neimeyer *et al*, 2014). Therefore, the active role of the police service in helping to shape post-loss
10 responses must be more clearly recognised, alongside the significance of police decision-making in
11 recordkeeping processes.

21 Where adequate information is obtained, and where there is capacity to assimilate the information into an
22 acceptable self-narrative, Matthews *et al* (2019) argue that individuals coping with traumatic death may adjust
23 more positively to loss. ~~However~~In contrast, Davies *et al* (2000) and Currier *et al* (2006) suggest that homicide
24 bereaved individuals are far more likely to suffer from an unsuccessful sense-making process due to the
25 violence of homicide as a mode of death. Field *et al* (2013) examines unsuccessful sense-making in continuing
26 bonds with the deceased, linking the inability to sense-make to maladaptive outcomes, such as distressing
27 illusions and hallucinations, in contrast to the ongoing comforting social presence that continuing bonds usually
28 perform for bereaved individuals.

36 Despite these difficulties, research has indicated that homicide bereaved individuals need to continue to engage
37 in meaning-making activities until some sense of coherence is established (Stretesky *et al*, 2010; Gilles and
38 Neimeyer, 2006). Crucially, the time elapsed since the initial loss of life is unlikely to be significant: if sense
39 cannot be made of the loss suffered, individuals will continue to display signs of grief and distress as they
40 continue their search for meaning and connection (Holland and Neimeyer, 2010; Neimeyer, 2006). The
41 experience of homicide bereavement may therefore be seen as a protracted and agonising search for meaning,
42 underpinned by a critical need for information through time (Armour, 2002b). As the sense-making process is
43 likely to be recursive and intensely distressing, there is a clear need to ensure that police information remains
44 accessible and available long-term to support the ongoing pursuit of meaning reconstruction, whether this leads
45 to a successful outcome or not (Neimeyer, 2006).

56 For the homicide bereaved, the trauma that follows violent death is unlikely to be limited to the nature of loss
57 itself as the deliberate taking of life necessitates a long-lasting engagement with the criminal justice system and
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3 a grieving process that takes place in full view of the public (Armour, 2002b; Malone, 2013 Casey, 2011). With
4 the commencement of an investigation, the overwhelming impact of the criminal justice system may be felt
5 immediately by bereaved individuals as the body of the victim is appropriated as evidence and personal items
6 and records are seized and re-contextualised as police exhibits. These actions mark the beginning of an imposed
7 sequence of events in which the needs of the homicide bereaved will ultimately become subordinate to the
8 process of criminal justice (Casey, 2011; Dunn *et al*, 2006).

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13 Despite the emergence of victimology as a discipline in the 1950s, it was not until the late 1990s that focus
14 shifted towards the distinct experiences of homicide bereaved individuals (Rock, 1998; Riches and Dawson,
15 1998). These developments shed new light on the impact of the criminal justice system on the grieving process
16 of the homicide bereaved and opened up wider debates around the construction of victimhood (Riches and
17 Dawson, 1998; Kenney, 2004; Rock, 1998).

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23 As wider social expectations typically equate victimisation with direct harm, the homicide bereaved occupy a
24 reduced position as their indirect experience of crime is considered to invalidate their status as a victim (Gekoski
25 and Adler, 2013; Bradford, 2019). This ‘lesser’ status may be seen in common labels used to categorise the
26 bereaved, such as ‘secondary victim’, suggesting a level of inferiority to ‘primary’ victims of crime (Bradford,
27 2019; Gekoski and Adler, 2013). According to Armour (2003; 2006), this ‘secondary’ status may be reinforced
28 by the state’s designation of itself as a surrogate victim in lieu of the deceased, shifting the narrative of injury
29 away from the bereaved. The ‘colonisation’ of an individual’s life story by the all-consuming narrative of the
30 state reduces the homicide bereaved to a ‘hidden’ population (Currier and Neimeyer, 2007; Armour, 2002a).

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42 Over the last decade, these issues have continued to receive attention with the development of narrative
43 victimology and the concept of narrative ownership (Hourigan, 2019, Pemberton *et al*, 2018, 2019). This has
44 seen greater emphasis placed on the personal accounts of victims of crime and the tensions that develop as these
45 self-narratives are forced into submission by the legal narrative of the criminal justice system (Pemberton *et al*,
46 2019). This loss of narrative ownership and control is argued by victimologists to compound the original trauma
47 of violent loss, resulting in the occurrence of ‘secondary victimisation’ (Gekoski and Adler, 2013; Stretesky *et*
48 *al*, 2010; Pemberton *et al*, 2019).

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3 Although secondary victimisation may take many forms, insufficient information access is considered to a key
4 enabler for this phenomenon across victimological research (Dannemiller, 2002; Stretesky *et al.*, 2010, Dunn *et*
5 *al.*, 2006). For the homicide bereaved, tThe provision of information and support from the police service has
6
7 been routinely singled out as an area of intense dissatisfaction ~~among bereaved individuals~~ (Malone, 2007;
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9 Gekoski and Adler, 2013; Dunn *et al.*, 2006; Casey, 2011). These frustrations have often revolved around the
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11 type and extent of information provided by the police service, and the manner in which this information is
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13 delivered (Gekoski and Adler, 2013; Malone, 2007; Casey, 2011). In exploring these issues, Bradford (2019)
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15 has drawn attention to the tensions that arise from the desire of the bereaved to know as much as possible about
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17 their loved one - what Bradford terms 'human and relational information' - and the police need to protect
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19 evidential details and case integrity (p228). Within victimology literature, this incongruity has often been
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21 evidenced in criminal justice processes that are considered highly emotive for the bereaved, but standard
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23 protocol for the police e.g. procedures concerning a victim's body or the retention of personal belongings (Dunn
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25 *et al.*, 2006; Casey, 2011; Bradford, 2019). In these cases, research has consistently shown the familial need for
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27 connection with the deceased (e.g. through access or touch) to be subordinate to the police need to prevent
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29 forensic contamination and ensure case integrity. This is argued by Casey (2011) to impede a basic
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31 psychological function in the bereavement process that enables an individual to begin to make sense of loss and
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33 assert control over their situation.
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37 These conflicts in access and use have been linked to the conceptualisation of the victim and their personal
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39 belongings as criminal evidence, owned and controlled by the Crown, rather than of any personal significance to
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41 the bereaved (Dunn *et al.*, 2006; Casey, 2011; Bradford, 2019). Kenney (2004) and Riches and Dawson (1998),
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43 draw attention to the way that grief may be conditioned by the institutional conventions of the criminal justice
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45 system, denying victims participation in key processes, and thwarting their ability to negotiate the meaning of
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47 information beyond its legal significance. For Armour (2002b), these interactions highlight the way sense-
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49 making may become dependent on the support and validation of legal institutions and social milieu as the
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51 significance of loss is able to be affirmed and upheld, or contested and denied, in encounters with others. This
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53 underscores the importance of a supportive and understanding police service in the aftermath of loss as
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55 competing ideas around the meaning of loss have the capacity to displace the personal narratives of individuals
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57 (Aldrich and Kallivayalli, 2016, Pemberton *et al.*, 2019).
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3 Hammond *et al* (2023) suggest the impact of homicidal loss is both extensive and ongoing for the bereaved,
4 describing this as a 'life sentence' for those suffering with its aftereffects. A report by the National Homicide
5 Service in 2019 also reached the same conclusion, noting the long-lasting and relational impact of grief across
6 bereaved families, as well as the need for individuals to re-engage support services through time (Moroz, 2019).
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10 Armour (2002a) notes that the 'closure' expected in a linear understanding of grief is unlikely to occur for the
11 homicide bereaved as personal circumstances and events combine to extend the grieving process, particularly
12 where the pursuit of criminal justice persists through time i.e. undetected cases.
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17 In Brown and Crego's (2019) study with 32 homicide bereaved families, a desire for extended emotional
18 support from FLOs was expressed by participants. However, this extension of support is noted to require a
19 balancing of individual needs, officer well-being and operational demand, a situation likely to prevent most
20 FLOs from acting in this capacity long-term (Roach *et al*, 2018). This presents a need to understand the current
21 police recordkeeping landscape in order to determine how information access is currently provided and whether
22 the police service are capable of meeting the needs of the bereaved through time.
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30 Where research has given mention to police records management, this has often focused on failure as an
31 investigative weakness impeding timely detection, rather than as a failure in access and care (Atkin and Roach,
32 2015). The evolution of police information management is commonly framed in the context of crime reduction
33 and prevention as opposed to information access for the general public and victims of crime (Collier, 2006).
34 However, a growing sub-set of literature around victim-focused disclosure schemes in other contexts does
35 provide some insight into police decision-making culture, suggesting a cautious and inconsistent approach to
36 information sharing because of inadequate guidance and the need to balance access with statutory obligations
37 (Hadjimatheou and Grace, 2021; McCartan, 2013).
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46 Sturges and Cooke (2008) noted that the changes brought in under APP MOPI challenged the police service to
47 move from a culture of information storage to one of information management and sharing. This would appear
48 to be still in progress as the most recent report into police culture by Casey (2023) found significant failings
49 across the Metropolitan Police Service in the management of records and exhibits. Changes to police
50 recordkeeping procedures are framed as reactive as problems are recognised in real time and audits (Byford,
51 1981; Bichard, 2004). This is perhaps most clear in the poor management of exhibits prior to the introduction of
52 the 2004 Human Tissue Act, where a 2012 audit found UK police forces retained whole organs and limbs from
53 homicide victims where burial or cremation had already occurred (ACPO, 2012). More recently, audits by the
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3 Information Commissioners Office (2020) have highlighted the inconsistent practice of the police service in
4 responding to information requests, with backlogs of Subject Access Requests and poor response times for
5 FOIA requests noted across multiple police forces.
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10 While the failure to receive timely information access may be significant to the public, who expect transparency
11 and fairness in police interactions, this is likely to be even more significant for the homicide bereaved who are
12 forced to use FOIA to gain access to information. Following the exit of the FLO, there is no official replacement
13 service to meet information needs through time other than the legislative route also available to the general
14 public. When an investigation is still live, standard police practice dictates that a single point of contact should
15 be established during an investigation, resulting in all contact information being imparted to immediate family
16 members only (NPCC 2020). This approach fails to take account of the complexity of family dynamics and the
17 differing information and emotional needs of individuals through time, which may present differently for and
18 across immediate family members, estranged relatives, siblings and younger children (Malone, 2007; Bradford,
19 2019; Dunn *et al*, 2006; Casey, 2011). This disparity extends through time meaning that differing family
20 members have distinct long-term information needs not easily met by FOIA.
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32 McDonagh and Paterson (2010) draw attention to the way information requests are treated as requestor and
33 purpose blind, with FOI disclosure considered to be to the world at large. This adherence to the principle of
34 neutrality and the broader interests of the public leaves the status of a bereaved individual incapable of being
35 acknowledged by the service (McDonagh and Paterson, 2010). Furthermore, this effectively establishes a legal
36 duty of confidence to the deceased after death as requests that are personal in nature are unlikely to meet the
37 high threshold for disclosure in the public interest (Donnelly and McDonagh, 2011). These issues are further
38 complicated by the need of FOIA requests to fall within a specified 18-hour limit to account for cost
39 implications (Johnson and Hampson, 2015; Kingston *et al*, 2019). This suggests that any homicide bereaved
40 individual utilising FOIA may require a tailored 'strategy' to obtain information. In considering the above, the
41 approach of the police service to recordkeeping and information access appears to be the antithesis of what
42 bereaved individuals require in the aftermath of violent loss. There is therefore a pressing need for a long-term,
43 tailored service for bereaved individuals that is currently not mandated in law or outlined in police practice.
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3 Despite recent shifts in the police information management landscape, a somewhat myopic approach to
4 recordkeeping has remained firmly embedded in current police practice through an emphasis on records as
5 evidence and retention for a 'policing purpose' (College of Policing, 2023). This approach reflects traditional
6 archival thinking that foregrounds evidential value, positioning the role of the record-keeper as objective and
7 detached (Jenkinson, 1922). This may be seen to reflect the objective stance of the MCU detective and the
8 overall tendency to prioritise the evidential integrity of records above all else during the investigatory period
9 (Brown and Crego 2019, p248). In this narrow conceptualisation, the use and activation of records as part of an
10 individual grieving process cannot be fully understood or accounted for (Douglas *et al*, 2022, p7). However,
11 where police recordkeeping has remained firmly in line within traditional theory and praxis, archival scholarship
12 has not.

13
14 Across archival studies, issues around access and control have been widely explored as academics have adopted
15 critical approaches to recordkeeping (Evans *et al*, 2017). Understandings have shifted from records as static
16 sources of information, singularly created and owned, towards a pluralistic view that acknowledges their
17 dynamic and multi-dimensional nature (McKemmish, 2001). Recent theory challenges traditional
18 understandings of provenance and record creatorship, bringing the concepts of co-creation and multiple /
19 parallel provenance to the forefront of archival practice (Rolan *et al*, 2018; Hurley, 2005). In these new
20 understandings, subjects of records are equal co-creators, paving the way for participatory approaches to
21 recordkeeping that aim to increase the agency and autonomy of those previously marginalised (Gilliland and
22 McKemmish, 2014). In advocating for this approach in a human rights/social justice context, Gilliland and
23 McKemmish (2014) reframe the archive as a negotiated space in which multiple communities have rights,
24 responsibility and agency, no matter the location of record holdings. These ideas are expanded by Evans *et al*
25 (2015) to argue that co-creators should be afforded the voice and agency necessary to become participatory
26 agents in records. As the impact of traditional recordkeeping practice has been explored in archival research, the
27 need for alternate models and approaches has been increasingly recognised by archival scholars, resulting in
28 calls for 'survivor-centred' approaches and shared stewardship, as well as information systems design that can
29 adequately support lifelong information needs (Caswell, 2014; Golding *et al*, 2012).

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31 These shifts in perspective help to demonstrate the limitations of current police recordkeeping practice,
32 highlighting the way traditional approaches may strip victims of their agency and autonomy by allowing control
33 to remain exclusively with the police service. The issue of narrative control shares parallels with the research
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3 undertaken in the context of Australian out-of-home Care leavers by Evans *et al* (2015) and Wilson and Golding
4 (2016), where the institutional denial of agency in the personal case files of care leavers results in records
5 having a long-lasting impact as ‘weapons of affect’ (p103).
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9 Archival scholarship has challenged the binary mindset adopted in institutional recordkeeping practice, which
10 typically views the ‘personal’ and the ‘organisational’ as distinct and separate categories creating a power
11 disparity for those seeking personal information from organisational records. Recent archival scholarship
12 recognises that personal archives may be located wherever an individual is captured in records, including
13 organisational recordkeeping systems (McKemmish and Piggot, 2013; Mills and Douglas, 2018). Douglas and
14 Mills (2018) define personal records based on their use, rather than their contents, utilising Eric Ketelaar’s
15 concept of record ‘activation’ to describe this process (p260). In police record-keeping, a clear disparity in
16 power is seen in the limited participation afforded to bereaved individuals in matters relating to review, retention
17 and destruction of records, where decision-making powers for victims are extended only to personal property no
18 longer required for a policing purpose[76].
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30 In acknowledging the above, all police held records have the potential to be personal if ‘activated’ for use by
31 victims of crime. In this view, the bereaved have an equal claim to an operational police record. However, as the
32 victimology literature has highlighted, access to this information is frequently denied due to its traumatic nature,
33 or in the interest of case integrity (Casey, 2011). Where records are unavailable to requestors, Gilliland and
34 Caswell have argued that individuals may experience a range of emotions in response to the ‘imagined-but-
35 unavailable’ record (Gilliland and Caswell, 2016). In the case of investigative material, the emotional response
36 of bereaved individuals may be extremely distressing as the lack of information around the circumstances of
37 violent loss can trigger the vivid and recurrent imagining of the loss event itself (Neimeyer, 2014a). This may be
38 eased through the granting of access and the increased capacity for sense-making this permits, though such use
39 cases have yet to be acknowledged in police recordkeeping and information access processes (Mowll, 2011).
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50 The affective dimensions of records have been explored extensively in recent archival literature with attending
51 to affect linked to addressing dominant power imbalances in recordkeeping processes (Cifor, 2016). Within
52 affective framings, the role of the archivist is framed as that of a caregiver with mutual affective responsibilities
53 to records creators, subjects, users and communities based on radical empathy (Caswell and Cifor, 2016). In
54 light of these responsibilities, Caswell and Cifor (2016) argue for the adoption of a feminist ethics of care as a
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3 means of addressing the limitations of rights-based approaches, challenging oppressive structures of power, and
4 centring the needs of those most affected by the record.
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8 As the dialogue around affect has expanded, archival scholarship has taken greater account of the emotional
9 impact of records, resulting in an increased awareness of trauma in records and recordkeeping practice (Wright
10 and Laurent, 2021). The concept of ‘traumatic potentiality’ recognises the traumatic potential of records and
11 their contents alongside the recordkeeping systems and practice that negatively impact their access and use
12 (Sexton *et al*, 2021, pp11-12). These issues are echoed in the work of Wright and Laurent (2021), who have
13 called for the adoption of trauma-informed practice across the archival sector to better serve the emotional
14 support needs of individuals activating potentially traumatic records. Trauma-informed archiving principles
15 centre the people most affected by the record, challenging the overwhelming bureaucracy of institutional
16 recordkeeping practice through a commitment to care-based and participative practice. This approach reflects a
17 wider shift towards participatory models of recordkeeping and care-based practice across archival scholarship.
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21 In the context of homicide, the application of a trauma-informed approach has been explored by Regeher *et al*
22 (2023), where a model of shared stewardship has been proposed for use with violent records to help address
23 issues of agency, privacy and public access. Building from the findings of a homicide case study and Michelle
24 Caswell’s (2016) ‘survivor-centred’ approach, the authors put forward a number of tailored considerations
25 intended to centre the needs of survivors, including control of decision-making processes and facilitating the
26 right to be forgotten i.e. record destruction. Vitaly, this model affords the homicide bereaved the autonomy and
27 agency they lack in police recordkeeping regimes. However, the needs and experiences of victims of crime are
28 multifaceted, particularly in the case of the homicide bereaved. With complex family dynamics and
29 individualised criminal justice system interactions producing different experiences of information disclosure, it
30 is likely that archivists/recordkeepers will face competing but perhaps equally valid claims for retention and
31 access on the one hand, and destruction and erasure on the other, from different family members (Bradford,
32 2019). These nuances demonstrate the need for an increased awareness around traumatic loss when working
33 with homicide related records, including the way historic denials of access may lead to differing information
34 needs. These considerations require nuanced balancing in any approach that seeks to centre the people most
35 affected by the record as noted in Caswell’s original conception of shared stewardship and recent research on
36 traumatic records (Laurent and Wright, 2021; Sexton *et al*, 2021).
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3 The complexities that surround information access and traumatic grief demonstrate the relevancy of recent
4 scholarship on records work as grief work (Douglas *et al* 2022). This research recognises grief as a primarily
5 affective response and draws on bereavement theory to highlight the valuing of records and records work by
6 bereaved individuals as part of the expression of grief and mourning (Douglas *et al*, 2019). Douglas *et al* (2019)
7 highlight the importance of enabling the bereaved to (1) create records, (2) work with / through records and (3)
8 co-create records to enable meaning to be constructed and loss to be assimilated into an acceptable self-
9 narrative. However, for the homicide bereaved, the acts present in working with and through records such as
10 weeding, annotation and preservation of records are likely to be denied by police recordkeeping practice
11 (College of Policing, 2023). The trauma associated with the denial of this autonomy may therefore compound an
12 inability to adapt to loss (Malone, 2007; Casey, 2011; Stretesky *et al*, 2010).

13
14 The adoption of a grief work perspective highlights the increased affective and ethical responsibilities that
15 police archivists and record-keepers have to individuals bereaved by homicide in mediating access to records
16 that represent the deceased (Douglas *et al* 2019). The relational work this entails demonstrates the need for a
17 trauma-informed approach that recognises the therapeutic value of information access for the bereaved, with
18 increased training and education for record-keepers to better support the emotional needs of the bereaved
19 through time (Sexton *et al*, 2021). This echoes earlier calls of victimologists for increased awareness around
20 homicidal bereavement and increased trauma training for police officers (Stretesky *et al*, 2010; Dannemiller,
21 2002; Brown and Crego, 2019; Riches and Dawson, 1998). This may not only improve outcomes for victims of
22 crime, but also aid police practitioners to avoid secondary trauma as the emotional impact of traumatic records
23 work becomes more fully addressed in police practice (Laurent and Wright, 2021; Brown and Crego, 2019).

24
25 This review highlights the limitations of current police recordkeeping as expressed in APP MOPI and
26 demonstrates the need for care-based practice and a trauma-informed approach when interacting with homicide
27 records and bereaved individuals. However, it remains to be seen what perceptions and role MCU officers and
28 staff hold and play in records management and mediating access to records long-term. This article now turns to
29 these issues, drawing from insights from the interview-based study with officers at BCHMCU.

30 **MCU officer perceptions on the provision of information to individuals bereaved by homicide**

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32 Within the study with officers at BCHMCU, interviewees placed particular emphasis on the intergenerational
33 impact of homicidal bereavement and the complexity of family dynamics, with reports of access requests from
34 distant relatives, younger siblings and children of homicide victims. These individuals were seen to have an
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3 increased need for information due to inadequate information provision during the investigative period and the
4 passage of time, particularly through the loss of key information sources, e.g. parents or guardians.
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8 One interviewee expressed the perception that following the exit of the FLO, the family need to move on to
9 grieve, and “have had enough of” [CR1] police intervention, implying that information needs commonly cease
10 once investigations close. The remaining interviewees were more explicit about the need for information
11 existing beyond the investigative period due to the idiosyncratic nature of bereavement. Interviewees noted the
12 “different needs” [CR3] that may arise for individuals outside of an investigation as a result of personal
13 circumstances and life events:
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20 “... there’s a lot of things that can affect it so.. people will go through counselling, and it might be that
21 following a period of counselling they’re ready to receive more information ” [CR2]
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25 These views suggest a majority consensus around the complex and enduring nature of homicidal bereavement.
26 Within this, officers appeared to acknowledge the unique role they occupy and perform through time in regard
27 to information provision for bereaved individuals.
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31 When asked about the information generally requested by bereaved individuals, all interviewees noted a need
32 for information in relation to the particulars of the case and the loss event itself, highlighting how this may
33 require providing further context and minute details around the circumstances of death:
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38 “... it’s important to understand, to provide context for that crime, it could be what an individual might
39 need ten years down the line when they come back. They could ask for the most obscure bit of
40 information, but you don’t know if what you hold is gonna give them that context” [CR4].
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42 However, interviewee understandings of homicidal bereavement were somewhat mixed, with some individuals
43 implying a linear stage model of grief, and others suggesting its dynamic nature. This demonstrates that the
44 ongoing process of sense-making for bereaved individuals may be at risk of being overlooked by some officers
45 due to an assumption of ‘healing’ through time. This provides further support for calls from victimologists for
46 increased training in traumatic loss and grief management to ensure the needs of individuals are adequately
47 understood and supported by officers through time (Dannemiller, 2002; Brown and Crego, 2019).
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53 54 55 56 **The current practice of MCU officers in managing and providing access to homicide records**

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58 Across all the interviews, the management and provision of access to homicide records for bereaved individuals
59 was framed by the interviewees against a backdrop of historic recordkeeping failures. These failures were
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3 thought to result from a lack of enforceable retention periods for police records prior to legislative changes.

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5 Interviewees particularly associated APP MOPI with more effective management of homicide records through
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7 time as seen through a policing lens, with improved retention framed as increasing the safety of convictions and
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9 the possibility of future detection in cold cases. However, all interviewees communicated an equal sense of
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11 dissatisfaction with the guidance and resources provided in support of the APP MOPI framework itself,
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13 considering these to be limited and unhelpful. Unfortunately, with APP MOPI being nationally mandated,
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15 officers currently have little choice but to work within the confines of this framework, regardless of whether its
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17 practice is perceived as harmful or unethical.

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19 In considering the impact of these new ways of working on everyday policing practice, interviewees suggested
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21 that a new form of records mismanagement was now prevalent across the department, with reports of over-
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23 retention and the avoidance of record retention and disposal as a whole. This was linked to the pervasiveness of
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25 evidentially focused recordkeeping and the perceived anxiety of officers around the disposal of forensically
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27 relevant material. The impact of this practice on bereaved individuals was highlighted specifically by one
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29 interviewee, who made reference to the over-retention of personal property of the deceased as a result of poor
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31 practice:

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34 “...we’ve got whole rooms full of property that should be returned to people, and of course, the longer
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36 it goes on, the worse it is to go and give that property back [...] when we do audits, freezers and things
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38 like that, we’re finding items of deceased jewellery, which is quite a personal thing” [CR2].

39
40 Across responses, interviewees referred to the intense operational demand experienced by homicide
41
42 investigators due to the volume of investigations conducted by the department. This was considered to result in
43
44 a tendency to leave archiving as “sitting on the back burner” [CR3], adding to the issues noted above.

45 46 ***The Duty to Protect***

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48 The obligation to protect individuals from harm by restricting or withholding information was one of the most
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50 prominent viewpoints to emerge from respondents in regard to information access. Although the right to self-
51
52 determine information for disclosure was supported, responses were often punctuated by a perceived need to
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54 shield the bereaved from inappropriate and potentially traumatic information. This was expressed in relation to
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56 post-mortem photographs and injury details, as well as the personal property of victims:
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3 “...we’re not in the business of upsetting people, even if there is that thirst for knowledge, there’s
4 enough within what was reported without knowing the gruesome details sometimes, irrespective of
5 what the individual may want” [CR1].
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7 When referring to the accessing of traumatic material, interviewees appeared perplexed that this type of
8 information may be requested by bereaved individuals, offering no reason as to why this might be required.
9

10 With officers seemingly unaware of the therapeutic potential of police records, it appears that current practice
11 may benefit from a greater understanding of the role of records in sense-making (Stretesky *et al*, 2010). This
12 may help to support a more informed decision-making process, preventing bereaved individuals from being
13 undermined, and ensuring the gatekeeping of traumatic records is minimised where it is deemed to be
14 unnecessary by these individuals.
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20 In relation to personal property, interviewee responses conveyed more of a willingness to involve the bereaved
21 in recordkeeping decisions, recognising the sentimental value and enduring emotional significance of personal
22 property:
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28 “I said we were destroying some property because they were bloodstained[...]but they were his trainers
29 and it was the last thing his dad has bought [...] so we just had to make sure and say ‘look these are
30 bloodstained. If you want that, you can have it, but you need to be prepared for it’” [CR2].
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34 With the needs of the bereaved being generally acknowledged in cases of personal property and disregarded in
35 cases of ‘police information’, interviewee responses suggest a traditional understanding of organisational and
36 personal archives (McKemmish and Piggott, 2013). The development of a wider understanding of records, as
37 developed in archival scholarship, may help to expand current perceptions of records and encourage the shift of
38 archival autonomy beyond the narrow confines of personal property. This may help pave the way for a greater
39 degree of agency and control for bereaved individuals in police recordkeeping decisions. Without this shift in
40 approach, it is likely that current practice will continue to be defined by imbalances of power in decision-
41 making and issues around self-determination.
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50 ***A Rights-based Legislative Framework for Access***

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52 When asked around the main channels used by bereaved individuals for access, all interviewees made reference
53 to information rights (DPA 2018/FOIA 2000) as a main entry route for information. Opinions of this framework
54 were mixed across respondents, with CR4 expressing frustration with its impersonal approach, and CR1
55 drawing out potential benefits of this:
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3 “There is always a danger, and this has happened to me repeatedly in my policing service, where
4 people then get that personal attachment and they won’t leave you alone, and you’ve told them all you
5 can them [...] whereas going through FOI keeps that level of sterility” [CR1].
6

7 The detachment displayed by CR1 reflects a more traditional stance towards recordkeeping than that adopted by
8 other interviewees, suggesting there may be a varying approach to service delivery across BCHMCU. As
9
10 Armour (2002a) has demonstrated the neutrality of officers around information access may carry a risk of harm
11 if a preference for objectivity is displayed over outward support and care. Irrespective of these differences, all
12 interviewees stressed the limits of disclosure within the current legislative framework as a potential barrier to
13 information. This was presented primarily in relation to the disclosure of personal details of victims and
14 offenders. These considerations echo those noted by McDonagh *et al* (2010) who have pointed towards the duty
15 of confidence established to the dead in the UK FOIA approach. The views of interviewees suggest that this
16 outlook may be embedded in the mentality of the police service, as opposed to FOIA specifically.
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25 Additional issues were also cited around the 18-hour time limit imposed by FOIA and the extent of information
26 held for particular cases. This was reported by CR1 as producing a need for bereaved individuals to tailor
27 requests in order to receive information. While the willingness of MCU officers to assist in this process may aid
28 information disclosure in some cases, the reported lack of digitisation and back record conversion for the
29 majority of MCU records suggests that requests were more likely to exceed the threshold.
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35 In acknowledging the limitations of rights-based approaches, all interviewees expressed a willingness to provide
36 information outside of FOIA and DPA. This was seen by respondents as enabling a more person-centred
37 approach to information access.
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42 “We do have to think, actually you know, can we tell them in some way, shape or form? How will that
43 do towards healing their wounds as opposed to us just sitting behind the regulations. So there needs to
44 be a bit of flexibility, a bit of fairness, a bit of reasonableness” [CR3].
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48 These views implied a sub-culture of care underneath the rights-based approach of APP MOPI, with officers
49 inclining towards person centred practice over rights-based frameworks in general. However, the lack of a
50 clearly publicised entry point was noted by all respondents as a potential barrier to offering a personalised
51 service more widely, with officers unclear on how such an issue may be solved. Adopting participatory
52 recordkeeping approaches from the archival field (Rolan, 2017; Evans *et al*, 2017) would enable a framework
53 for records management and access that increases agency and autonomy for the homicide bereaved.
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3 The need for care was also linked by the interviewees to the well-being of officers in providing a continuous
4 service through time. This was considered necessary by interviewees due to the stress of exposure to potentially
5 traumatic situations and operational demand, reflecting a general theme in policing literature around
6 organisational and operational stressors (Roach *et al*, 2017, 2018). These issues highlight the relevancy of
7 Wright and Laurent's (2021) call for trauma informed practice within archival scholarship in order to ensure
8 both victims and record-keepers have adequate support. As a strengths-based approach that seeks to minimise
9 negative exposure in a framework of safety, collaboration, trust, transparency and empowerment, the
10 implementation of this practice has the potential to reduce the risk of secondary trauma for record-keepers,
11 while also encouraging a more informed and participatory approach for requestors. While the implementation of
12 such an approach is likely to require support on a national scale, the interview responses demonstrate a clear
13 need to advocate for change at the highest possible level in the interest of all stakeholders in police records.
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25 **The capability of current recordkeeping practice to move beyond the use of homicide records for their** 26 **primary 'policing' purpose**

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29 The interview data indicates an understanding amongst officers around the need for long-term access and the
30 enduring nature of homicide, particularly in relation to its intergenerational impact. However, understandings
31 around the complexities of homicidal bereavement and the role of information in sense-making were found to be
32 less consistent, resulting in less supportive practice from officers in information disclosure. The narrow focus of
33 APP MOPI and the evidential focus embedded in everyday police practice was found to curtail any
34 consideration of victim impact in retention decisions. Overall, this was found to produce a form of inadvertent
35 gatekeeping as the lack of officer knowledge, guidance and confidence in records retention and destruction
36 processes was seen to prevent ethical decision-making, resulting in a tendency to over-retain and obstruct
37 access.
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48 The interview data confirms that access for the homicide bereaved is impeded by the enshrinement of a rights-
49 based approach across police practice, which is particularly compounded by the exemptions and limitations of
50 FOIA. The alternate unofficial service offered by officers which was surfaced through the interviews to remedy
51 these issues indicates a willingness amongst officers to offer long-term support and care to the homicide
52 bereaved. However, unclear access routes and limited capacity impede the reach and utility of such 'backdoor'
53 services.
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3 In considering the overall ability of police recordkeeping practice to support the long-term information needs of
4 individuals bereaved by homicide, it is clear that officers are willing to provide more direct and supportive
5 access services. However, this is bound by the narrowness of current recordkeeping frameworks and limited
6 officer understandings around trauma and homicidal bereavement in general. These issues demonstrate a clear
7 need to embed victim/survivor and trauma-informed approaches in police recordkeeping practice in order to
8 fully support the long-term needs of both the homicide bereaved and police record-keepers through time.
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15 **Conclusion**

16 This research identifies the information needs of homicide bereaved individuals in the context of a prolonged
17 and agonising grieving process and a recursive search for meaning. The research highlights that the information
18 needs of homicide bereaved individuals are ill-served by the current police recordkeeping framework, which
19 provides little access and support due to its criminal justice-focused framing, which reinforces the subordination
20 of wider stakeholder needs.
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27 The research highlights that the use of FOIA as the main information gateway for the homicide bereaved is
28 particularly limiting due to its cost exemptions and confidentiality clauses and its focus as a public gateway to
29 information. Within the confines of this, officers are restricted in their want to provide a more personal, direct
30 service to bereaved individuals. Whilst a sub-culture of care was uncovered in the willingness of officers to
31 provide a direct alternate ‘back door’ service outside of FOIA, the lack of a direct entry point to the department
32 and the unofficial nature of this route is a major barrier.
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40 Key findings emerging from this research in relation to the information needs of individuals bereaved by
41 homicide in the context of police recordkeeping can be summarised as a long term need for: (1) information
42 access; (2) support for access; (3) a direct and personalised information access service and (4) trauma-informed
43 and victim/survivor centred practice in police recordkeeping contexts.
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49 The current inability of police recordkeeping to fully support the needs of homicide bereaved individuals
50 through time is shown as a matter in desperate need of addressing by the police service. It is also clear that
51 current authorised policing practice and the accompanying recordkeeping and information access framework
52 requires a major overhaul to become victim/survivor centred. The authors advocate for the adoption of
53 victim/survivor centred and trauma-informed approaches to recordkeeping and access within newly developed
54 authorised police practice. Such an overhaul would serve the long-term information needs of the homicide
55 bereaved, while also ensuring that officers are more fully supported in their recordkeeping role.
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Notes

[1] The term ‘homicide’ is applied to victims of murder and manslaughter (including corporate manslaughter and infanticide) as defined in the National Police Chiefs’ Council (2021) Major Crime Investigations Manual.

The term ‘homicide’ has been used interchangeably with ‘violent loss’ to describe the mode of death, while the term ‘traumatic loss’ has been used to describe the experience of bereavement.

[2] The terms ‘individual bereaved by homicide’ and ‘homicide bereaved’ have been used interchangeably to refer to anyone with a familial relationship to a deceased victim from homicide in line with current criminal justice definitions.

[3] Where the term ‘victim’ is employed, it should be taken to mean all victims of crime, including the homicide bereaved.

[4] Under MOPI ([see below](#)), a ‘policing purpose’ is defined as police information that protects life and property, preserves order, prevents the commission of offences, brings offenders to justice, or any duty or responsibility of the police arising from common or statute law.

[5] In England and Wales, homicide investigations are the responsibility of specialist units or teams within police constabularies. As this research focuses on Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire police, the BCH designation of MCU has been adopted here. Where this term has been employed generally as “MCU” it should be taken to mean a specialist police department responsible for the investigation of homicide. Where this is prefixed by BCH, this is in specific reference to Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, and Cambridgeshire Major Crime Unit (BCHMCU)

[6] [The APP MORI framework is available at https://www.college.police.uk/app/information-management/management-police-information](https://www.college.police.uk/app/information-management/management-police-information)

[7] The return of personal property is required where retention cannot be justified for investigative purposes under PACE 1984 and Police (Property) Act 1897.

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