

Letter from Caroline Russell AM: support for victims of serious injury collisions and bereaved families

Key information

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1. Letter from Caroline Russell AM about support for victims of serious injury collisions and bereaved families

9 April 2025

Dear Sadiq,

Support for victims of serious injury collisions and bereaved families

Following on from my questions to you at Mayor's Question Time (MQT) on 20 March 2025, as promised, I am writing to express my concern at the lack of consistent support provided by both the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) and Transport for London (TfL) for victims of serious collisions and bereaved families.

I appreciate your response at both MQT and People's Question Time (PQT) on 6 March 2025, to Abbey's description of her experience of communication with both TfL and the MPS after the death of her fiancé while crossing the road in May 2024. I was particularly concerned to hear from her that support services offered required active follow-up when she was in the depths of trauma and immediate grief, which meant she did not get the specialised support she desperately needed. Abbey also told me about being warned that investigation times were lengthy, and this was blamed on resourcing issues in the Serious Collision Investigation Unit (SCIU). Further, the Family Liaison Officer (FLO) assigned to her fiancé's family was seconded to another project for three months without notification.

I understand from your answer to my questioning at MQT that the Victim's Commissioner is already involved in Abbey's case. Could you confirm that Abbey's experience of post-crash interaction with the MPS and TfL will be investigated and any lessons learned?

At MQT we also spoke briefly about the responses to the recommendations in the Police and Crime Committee (PCC) report, Police Investigation of Serious Injury Collisions in London, that the Committee Chair received from the MPS and TfL, which I have addressed in the attached Appendix. [1]

The increase in the number of people walking and cycling being killed by motor vehicles on London's roads, which I recently wrote about to the TfL Commissioner copying you in, underlines the urgent need to make meaningful progress on your Vision Zero target. [2]

People walking and cycling suffer proportionately more serious injuries than vehicle occupants, representing 59 per cent of all reported Killed and Seriously Injured (KSIs) collisions in 2023. This is a 14 per cent increase on the baseline period for Vision Zero in London of 2005-2009 when the figure was 45 per cent. [3]

Apart from the disproportionate impact of road death and serious injury on these groups, their needs are different to those of vehicle occupants because in most cases they will not have motor insurance. This means bereaved families and people with serious injuries are reliant on high-quality investigations by the MPS to claim compensation and help to cope with and recover from their injuries.

Could you clarify how each of the MPS and TfL responses to the recommendations in the report apply in the case of crashes involving people walking and cycling?

I am also concerned that over a third of seriously injured cyclists are reporting their collisions online, suggesting that police may be less likely to attend the scene of a collision between a motor vehicle and someone riding a bike.

Could you clarify how the MPS follows-up and investigates collisions that are reported online and what data you collect about the outcomes?

The PCC report covered all serious injury collision investigations (just under 3,859 in London in 2022), and yet most responses to the report from the MPS appear only to cover the 100 crashes investigated by the SCIU.

Around 1,000 of the 3,859 KSI collisions each year are classed as either 'very serious' or 'moderately serious' and as such are likely to have a significant impact on the victim's life. I understand the majority of these very or moderately serious collisions are investigated by borough police and then the MO10 Allegations Department at Marlowe House.

I am interested in the investigation of this wider group of serious collisions. Could you address each recommendation (where appropriate) from the perspective of this wider group outside the 100 most serious collisions investigated by SCIU?

I was pleased to see that on 24 March 2025 TfL announced it is seeking a supplier to provide a long-term support service for victims of road traffic collisions in London, after the pilot scheme service ends on 31 October 2025.

I hope that TfL will continue to listen to the issues raised by Abbey and others following their post-crash experiences and use this insight to inform the provisions within the long-term support service.

Further to the questions raised in this letter, in the attached appendix you will find my feedback and follow-up questions to each of the responses from the MPS and TfL to the recommendations in the report.

I look forward to hearing from you, the MPS and TfL.

Yours sincerely,

Caroline Russell

Leader of the Green Group on the London Assembly

[1] Serious injury collisions report, Police and Crime Committee, 15 Mar 2024,
<https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/london-assembly-work/london-assembly-publications/serious-injury-collisions-report>

[2] Concerns about the number of road deaths in London in 2024, Caroline Russell AM, 4 Feb 2025
<https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/london-assembly-members/publications-caroline-russell/concerns-about-number-road-deaths-london-2024>

[3] Road Collision Data, Transport for London, <https://tfl.gov.uk/corporate/publications-and-reports/road-safety>

Appendix:

Response to the London Assembly Police and Crime Committee report – Police Investigation of Serious Injury Collisions in London – from the Metropolitan Police Service and Transport for London

Response from the Metropolitan Police Service

It was disappointing it took the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) nearly 11 months to write to the Chair of the Police and Crime Committee (PCC) in response to the recommendations in the March 2024 report, Police Investigation of Serious Injury Collisions in London.

Recommendation 1

The Met should backfill vacant posts within its Serious Collision Investigation Unit (SCIU) as a priority, and provide an update on vacancy rates in the Unit to this Committee by December 2024.

“The MPS accepts this recommendation and has actioned it. The recruitment process is live and we expect to achieve our full Budgeted Workforce Target by April 2025. As such, vacancy rates are falling and we expect them to continue to fall.”

This is welcome. Could you tell me whether this includes a full complement of Forensic Collision Investigators (FCIs) and, what steps are being taken to ensure that FCIs will investigate not only fatal crashes, but also serious injury collisions?

Recommendation 2

By 31 December 2024, the Met should review its guidance and training offered to police officers attending the scene of a collision, to ensure they understand what is required and that all necessary “basic checks” are being completed.

“The MPS accepts this recommendation and a new training programme is being delivered across frontline officers. We will continue to review the new programme to ensure our officers are equipped with the skills and training needed for the job.”

It would be helpful to have more information about the new training programme to enable ongoing scrutiny to assess the impact of the training on improving the collection of evidence at the scene of a collision. In particular:

- **How many officers are being trained and by when?**
- **How are officers being selected for the training?**
- **Could you provide more details on the training, ie how much time is spent on motoring offences and investigation?**
- **How is the training reviewed and evaluated?**

Recommendation 3

In response to this report, the Met should set out what oversight and performance measures it has in place to quality-assure evidence collected at the scene of a serious injury collision.

“The MPS has considered this recommendation. For the avoidance of doubt, there is a robust quality assurance process in place. This is carried out by the Forensic Collision Investigation Unit (FCIU) and meets the requirements of the Forensic Science Regulator (FSR).”

“Please note, Forensic Collision Investigators (FCI) do not have the capacity to attend the scene of every serious injury collision. For those collisions where the threshold criteria for FCI attendance is not satisfied, Roads Policing Collision Scene Examiners (CSEs), who are equipped to photograph and measure the scene, can attend.”

“We are currently reviewing CSE equipment alongside the piloting of new AI technology. The new technology is capable of 3D scanning the scene without the need for an FCI, resulting in higher quality measurements.”

I understand that FCIs do not have the capacity to attend every crash scene and look forward to the results of the review of the CSE equipment and AI pilot. Could you clarify the quality-assurance measures in place for investigations conducted by both borough police and the MO10 Allegations Department at Marlowe House?

Recommendation 4

The Met should develop an action plan for how it will ensure all officers involved in the investigation of serious injury collisions are equipped with the most up-to-date guidance and training. The Met should provide an update to this Committee on planned extra training for collision investigators by 31 December 2024. The Met should also consider how it can involve organisations that support road traffic victims in the design and provision of this additional training.

“The MPS has considered this recommendation. For the avoidance of doubt, all relevant officers receive appropriate guidance and training in line with their responsibilities. This is delivered by MP Learning and Development Command and external professional training bodies.”

“This includes:

- *All MPS officers receive training covering how to report/investigate Road Traffic Collisions (RTC) during their initial police training.*
- *During their probationary period, any RTC report will be ‘supervised’ by an experienced supervisor to ensure it meets initial investigation requirements. To note, if it fails to meet requirements, the supervisor will set an action plan which will form part of the officer’s ongoing learning.*
- *Officers in the Roads & Transport Policing Command (RTPC) receive additional technical training on collision investigation. This covers the initial capture of key evidence at the scene.*
- *RTPC officers are also trained to assess the roadworthiness of vehicles. This training is delivered in two parts: standard and advanced. It covers the theoretical and practical aspects of vehicle inspection, vehicle systems and vehicle components, allowing officers to make accurate assessments of a vehicle roadworthiness and legal compliance. Officers with advanced training are able to prohibit vehicles from road use.*
- *If a collision meets the threshold for investigation by the Serious Collision Investigation Unit, a full qualified/experienced detective will own the investigation. In accordance with The College of Policing (Authorised Professional Practice), these officers will be qualified through Professional Investigations Programme (PIP) 2 Level Investigators. In addition, Detective Sergeants receive training to become Evidential Review Officers.*
- *The RTPC training and development team is involved in the co-ordination, monitoring and compliance of training and other courses (e.g. driving courses etc.).”*

The PCC heard during its investigation that the MPS officers’ initial police training included very little training with regards to motoring offences and this was included within the ‘non-crime’ part of the training. We heard that 22 minutes were dedicated to driving offences, 21 minutes on vehicle offences and 20 minutes on driving under the influence of drink and drugs. [1]

Campaigners on behalf of road traffic victims tell me they are concerned this seems minimal training for MPS officers attending the majority of serious injury collisions (ie not the 100 most serious crashes investigated by the SCIU). Does the MPS support developing an Action Plan with TfL as part of Vision Zero to improve the investigation of the collisions that are not investigated by the SCIU?

I also note that this response from the MPS does not address the point: “The Met should also consider how it can involve organisations that support road traffic victims in the design and provision of this additional training.” The organisations that support road traffic victims include RoadPeace, Brake and the Sarah Hope Line, and their experience of supporting victims and bereaved families could be an integral part of the training all officers involved in the investigation of serious injury collisions receive.

Could you confirm whether the MPS currently involves organisations that support road traffic victims in the design of its guidance and training, and if not, will you ensure that this happens?

Recommendation 5

The Mayor should work with the Met to create information guides to distribute to victims and their families to ensure they know what service and minimum standards to expect from the Met during an investigation.

“The MPS has considered this recommendation. Following a fatal collision, the Family Liaison Officer (FLO) will discuss with the bereaved family if they want to be referred to the National Road Victim Service (NRVS), who are able to provide a Caseworker program. The program offers specialist advice/guidance and advocates on the family’s behalf, supporting them through the trauma.

“At the initial visit, the family is also given an A5 binder supplied by Brake. This contains useful information, such as what happens next and other practical assistance. In addition, if there are young children affected by the bereavement, the family is given an illustrated book and help guide (written by Brake). This helps support children through their grief.

“For families affected by serious personal injury, there is also an A5 booklet. This is designed to provide assistance and support. These families can also be referred to the NRVS.

“In addition to the above, we understand TfL has developed their new ‘Commitment of Openness’, which will be sent to victims and families affected by incidents on the TfL network.”

Given the distressing post-crash experience raised by Abbey at People’s Question Time (PQT) on 6 March 2025, could you outline what checks are in place to ensure the system of support is working as you describe?

Further, could you clarify what information is provided to seriously injured victims whose cases are not investigated by the SCIU and whether there is scope to improve the current provision?

Recommendation 6

The Met should work with MOPAC, and the London Victims’ Commissioner, to introduce a satisfaction survey for victims of serious injury collisions in 2025-26; and publish the results of this survey. The MPS has considered this recommendation.

“The MPS has introduced the ‘My Met Service’ which gives the public the opportunity to feedback on their experiences, good and bad. At present, this service is not available for serious injury collisions. However, RTPC is scoping the possibility of extending this service to victims affected by collisions/families of victims. This work will continue throughout 2025. This will include collaboration with the London Victims’ Commissioner.”

I very much hope the RTPC will extend the ‘My Met Service’ to victims of serious injury collisions and I look forward to the next update on this.

Could you clarify that this service will extend to all seriously injured victims and not just those whose cases are investigated by the SCIU, and that the survey will collect the views of victims, campaigners and solicitors?

Recommendation 7

The Met should review its standard operating procedures and guidance to increase the amount of information that victims receive in serious injury investigations that result in no further action (NFA). The Met and TfL should establish a joint review of serious injury collisions that result in NFA decisions in 2023-24, to ensure that these decisions were appropriately quality-assured and well communicated to the victims involved. In response to this report, they should share the terms of reference for this review.

“The MPS has considered this recommendation. The MPS and TfL have agreed to work together to explore a joint review of serious injury collisions that result in NFA. However, please note this will require further consideration for a number of reasons. In particular, TfL does not have a lawful basis to review Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) decision-making. Further, we must be mindful of the wishes of the victim’s family (i.e. they may not want to review.”

The purpose of this recommendation was to check why so few collisions causing serious injury result in a prosecution. As requested in the recommendation, could you confirm that you intend to provide more information to victims when a decision of NFA is reached?

Further, could you confirm the terms of reference for this joint review of serious injury collisions that result in NFA decisions, and that both the joint review with TfL and the review of information provided to victims will:

- **extend to all seriously injured victims and not just those whose cases are investigated by the SCIU,**
- **investigate why so few collisions result in a prosecution for causing serious injury, and**
- **take into account the views of victims, campaigners and solicitors?**

Recommendation 8

The Met should ensure every road crash victim that has life-threatening or life-changing injuries, and their family, has access to a dedicated family liaison officer (FLO).

“The MPS has considered this recommendation. FLOs are a limited resource. It is important to highlight not all officers in the Serious Crime Investigators Unit want to be an FLO (the role can be demanding, especially emotionally). As such, the course is voluntary. This means FLO deployment is limited to families of fatal collision victims, which is in line with College of Policing Recommendations. In a small number of serious injury collision cases, where the victim suffers life threatening injuries or there are complex judiciary proceedings, a FLO deployment can be considered but this will only be in extremis.”

This recommendation was about extending the support of a dedicated FLO to every road crash victim with life-threatening or life-changing injuries. It is very disappointing to read this response, which rightly describes the pressure on police officers performing the FLO role, but fails to take into account how ‘emotionally demanding’ it is for someone to lose a loved one in such a brutal, sudden and unexpected way.

Will the MPS take heed of the post-crash experiences shared by so many people, either bereaved or very seriously injured, and seek to provide more support to officers volunteering as FLOs and thereby extending their availability?

Recommendation 9

The Met should improve training, and associated guidance, provided to investigative officers and staff about what information they can disclose to victims, families and lawyers during the investigation of a serious injury collision. It should provide the Committee with an update on how it has improved this information training by 31 December 2024.

“The MPS has considered this recommendation. Please note, the decision to share information with a victim or family during the course of an investigation is extremely difficult to capture in written guidance as it will depend on a number of critical factors. As such, the investigating officer reserves the right to make a decision in this regard.

“Training on family liaison, victim contact, media management and decision making does form part of the PIP2 detective training. In addition, when a case is led by a Senior Investigating Officer (SIO), for example, in a Category A fatal investigation, there will be enhanced knowledge as the SIO will have undergone accredited SIO

training. As part of the Family Liaison Strategy, the SIO will document all decisions on contact and information sharing.

“In cases where decision-making must sit at a more senior level, perhaps due to sensitivities or political factors, a Gold Commander will be appointed.

“For these reasons, we do not consider it possible to standardise information sharing practice (i.e. it must be considered on a case by case basis).”

This recommendation was made in regard to disclosure primarily for the purposes of victims making an insurance claim, which has not been addressed in the response. I understand there is National Police Chief’s Council (NPCC) guidance on disclosure procedures, however during the investigation we heard this not always adhered to and that there are issues with solicitors accessing evidence for the purposes of making an insurance claim. [2]

Could you tell me how disclosures are made for investigations being carried out by both borough police and the MO10 Allegations Department at Marlowe House?

Recommendation 10

By 31 December 2024, the Met should explore the possibility of developing a standardised process and an online portal for victims and families of serious injury collisions to request information.

“The MPS has considered this recommendation. However, at the present time, we do not have the resources necessary to pursue this suggestion further.”

It is disappointing to hear that the resource is not available to support victims and families of serious injury collisions in this way. I hope that the MPS will look out for any future opportunities to provide this support as they arise.

Response from Transport for London

Recommendation 7

The Met should review its standard operating procedures and guidance to increase the amount of information that victims receive in serious injury investigations that result in no further action (NFA). The Met and TfL should establish a joint review serious injury collisions that result in NFA decisions in 2023-24, to ensure that these decisions were appropriately quality-assured and well communicated to the victims involved. In response to this report, they should share the terms of reference for this review.

“In response to this recommendation, TfL and the MPS have agreed to work together to establish a joint review of serious injury collisions that result in NFA decisions, and this will require a careful and considered approach due to a number of factors.

“TfL does not have a lawful basis to review Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) decision making, so we will need to work with the MPS to gain a better understanding on how to progress this aspect of the process.

“We are also aware of the need to be mindful of the victims' right to review and their wishes regarding reopening cases. The Victims' Right to Review (VRR) Scheme gives victims the right to ask for a review of a police decision not to charge a suspect.

“We will continue to discuss with the MPS and consult on appropriate next steps. We will share an update with the Committee in the coming months on our progress to establish the joint review.”

I welcome this report of joint working with the MPS. Could you give me an indication of the expected timeframe for publishing the progress report on establishing a joint review?

Recommendation 11 (a)

The Committee welcomes the announcement of the new victim support service. In response to this report, MOPAC and TfL should provide the committee with a written update on the latest status of the pilot, and any learning so far.

“The road victim support service pilot was established with the aim of significantly improving support for victims of the most serious road traffic collisions in London. The service is funded by TfL and MOPAC, and delivered by charities Brake and RoadPeace, working in partnership with the MPS and City of London Police.

“The pilot provides an enhanced quality of support through provision of services not previously available in London. Brake caseworkers are providing trauma-informed emotional and practical support for victims and their families, in person, over the phone and online. RoadPeace are providing longer-term aftercare, connecting victims with others who’ve been through a similar experience via support groups, befriending and their trauma support programme for bereaved families. Direct referral from the police makes it easier for victims to access services, with the aim of connecting more people with support.

“Since the service launched on 13 November 2023, approximately 82 people who have been left bereaved or seriously injured in road traffic collisions have been supported or are currently in the care of the service (as of 31 May 2024). Brake and RoadPeace have reported positive feedback from those being supported through this enhanced service.

“Since this is a new service and we could only estimate service user numbers prior to launch, we were cautious in defining the scope to ensure the newly established Brake and RoadPeace teams would not be overstretched – limiting it to bereaved or seriously injured victims of collisions investigated by the MPS Serious Collision Investigation Unit or City of London Police from the launch date. We have now been able to refine our assumptions and expand the scope to victims and families whose collision pre-dates the pilot launch, as well as victims of serious injury collisions outside those being investigated by the Serious Collision Investigation Unit.

“We are still in the process of embedding the service, with referrals and the number of people being supported by Brake and RoadPeace still growing. A multi-agency project team is in place and meets regularly to oversee delivery, iron out any issues and embed the service. We continue to monitor all aspects of the trial and have commissioned an independent evaluation, which will enable us to share a more comprehensive view of learnings at the end of the pilot, and we can share a further update with the Assembly once this review is finalised.”

I am pleased to see that this pilot will be made permanent. The interim evaluation report is helpful to understand how the service is working from the perspective of the users quoted.

Recommendation 11 (b)

By 31 December 2024, MOPAC and the London Victims’ Commissioner should also carry out a review of the support offered to victims and families of all serious injury collisions and identify a set of actions to ensure support is available in every case.

“The Vision Zero action plan outlines our shared commitment to improve support for victims of road collisions.

“Brake and RoadPeace, as the national road safety and road victim charities, provide a national victim support service for all seriously injured victims which, alongside other services, are promoted by the police. We are aware that services are under pressure with the removal of government funding, and we await a decision on the government's future plans for victim support.

“The road victim support pilot aims to enhance the support available from Brake and RoadPeace for those left bereaved or catastrophically injured, bringing it more in line with support provision for homicide and victims of serious violence.

“MOPAC and TfL had discussed the possibility of this service for some time. MOPAC’s Victims Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) from 2021 included input from RoadPeace as it was acknowledged that there was a gap in provision for victims of road traffic collisions. MOPAC will be refreshing the SNA this year to inform the next Police and Crime Plan.

“The learning from the Road Traffic Victims Pilot will be considered as part of the SNA refresh to inform MOPAC and TfL’s next steps in bridging the gap in support for victims of road traffic collisions. While we do not think victim support should be a postcode lottery, we will do all we can to ensure that people seriously injured in collision in London have access to appropriate support.”

I welcome this victim focussed response and look forward to seeing the MOPAC refresh of the Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) that is taking place this year.

[1] Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Question and Answer Session with the Mayor’s Office, Police and Crime Committee, 24 Jan 2024, p19, <https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/londonassembly/meetings/documents/b29245/Minutes%20-%20Appendix%201%20-%20Panel%201%20Wednesday%2024-Jan-2024%2010.00%20Police%20and%20Crime%20Committee.pdf>

[2] Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Police Investigation of Serious Injury Collisions, Police and Crime Committee, 22 Nov 2023, p23, <https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/londonassembly/meetings/documents/b29067/Minutes%20-%20Appendix%201%20-%20Police%20Investigation%20of%20Serious%20Injury%20Collisions%20Wednesday%2022-Nov-2023%2010.0.pdf>