

Case study – Louise Liddle

“Victims don't just suffer because of the incident itself. They suffer because of the uncertainty, the delays and the lack of trauma-informed support afterwards. We should not have to become campaigners to fix the system.”

John Liddle died after being knocked off his bicycle by a minibus in May 2023. There were no witnesses and the driver of the bus was not prosecuted. Delays in the investigation left John's wife, Louise, with more questions than answers about what happened.

Louise says her experience of the criminal justice system echoes those represented in the report, and that its recommendations are desperately needed.

“The criminal justice system often relied on me asking the right questions – about timescales, procedures, what information could be shared – but my husband was in a coma, I had two little boys to look after, and I was having to make life and death decisions about our future.

“It wasn't lack of sensitivity, but a lack of understanding of the deeply traumatic situation I'd been plunged into overnight, which prevented the police from being able to hold us through the process.

“I felt the police were on my side throughout and were genuinely fighting for my case. They appealed the CPS's decision not to prosecute the bus driver twice. But so much is out of their control because protocols limit what action they can take and what information they can share.

“In my case, red tape meant the police weren't able to interview the bus driver for nine weeks, and they didn't have the power to suspend his driving licence pending the outcome of the investigation.

“So, he returned to work straight away, driving minibuses past my house every day. That was incredibly traumatic and I had to move away from the area as a result.

“After John died, I was waiting a fortnight for the coroner's office to release his body. We eventually had the funeral, but we still had no information about how John died, so we had to say our goodbyes without knowing what really happened and why.

“Because I wasn't given clear information about the civil claims process, I didn't know whether I needed to approach a legal team, where to go or what I should be asking them.

“It was by chance that I'd spoken to a friend, who advised me to find a solicitor. I was able to advocate for myself because I have worked with solicitors before. But so many others don't have that advantage. We must have better support for victims to navigate that system and protect them when they're at their most vulnerable.”

“A truly victim-centred system needs to learn from families' experiences without requiring us to fight for these changes while we're grieving.”

Brake, the road safety charity has supported this family through its National Road Victim Service. Brake provides specialist practical and emotional support to more than 2,000 families a year following a death or serious injury from a road crash.

Visit www.brake.org.uk/support to find out more.