

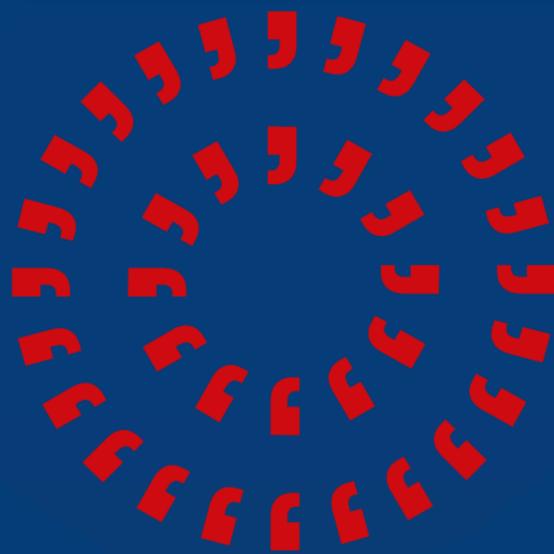


Survivors
against terror



A Second Trauma

Media reporting of terror attacks through the eyes of survivors.



A Second Trauma:

Media reporting of terror attacks through the eyes of survivors

Summary:

Survivors Against Terror (SAT) surveyed survivors of UK terror attacks asking them of their experiences in dealing with the media.

SAT recognises the vital role the free media plays in keeping the public informed of terrorism and its impacts.

However, this research has found that media intrusion into the grief and lives of the injured and bereaved is endemic across the media involving almost all major newspapers and broadcasters.

- 59% of survivors said they had suffered media intrusion.
- Complaints included intrusion, pestering and pressure, misrepresentation, and invasion of privacy.
- Around 90% of survivors support reducing the focus on the terrorist's names and identities.
- Over 80% say videos made by terrorists should never be shown even in part.
- And 98% agree that terrorist 'manifestos' shouldn't be a high-profile part of media coverage.
- Over half of survivors (52%) surveyed said they had also had positive experiences of working with the media.

Following the survey, SAT is calling for:

- A voluntary agreement not to directly contact the bereaved and seriously injured for at least the first 48 hours following an attack.
- No pictures should be used of the bereaved or seriously injured without family permission. There should be no use of pictures of family homes and no congregation outside the houses of the injured and bereaved.
- The creation of a Survivors' Support Hub to provide independent information and support to survivors of terror attacks.
- In cases of malicious breaches, the Police (or a newly created Survivors Support Hub) should publicly name those outlets and exclude them from any arranged press briefings or interviews.
- The creation of a new system to confirm fatalities once families have been informed and have been able to tell their loved ones. News outlets should agree not to report on their names until it is confirmed that loved ones have been informed.
- IPSO, IMPRESS and OFCOM to agree and publish new guidance (including the above recommendations) that can then be incorporated by all media outlets. Editors need to be clear that there is a zero-tolerance approach to breaches.

Acknowledgments

This report is based on the views and testimony of over 100 individuals. In order to inform this report all of those individuals had to relive painful and traumatic memories of fear, loss, grief and anger. Emotions often compounded – as we will hear - by media intrusion. Our first and most profound thanks is to them for being willing to share their trauma in the hope that it eases the suffering of others in the future.

This research was overseen by a group of Survivors including Brendan Cox, Travis Frain, Darryn Frost, Figen Murray and Claudia Vince. It was improved by comments from Jo Berry and Charlotte Dixon-Sutcliffe.

We want to thank Kantar, especially Jon Puleston and James Rushmere, who helped compile the polling analysis upon which so many of our conclusions were based.

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Introduction

Survivors Against Terror (SAT) was set up by people injured and/or bereaved by terrorism. Our mission as a group of survivors is to tackle terrorism and the harm that it causes. We do this through a focus on three objectives:

1. Pushing for better support for survivors.
2. Campaigning for policy changes to make future attacks less likely.
3. Helping the public play an active role in tackling terrorism.

When we were first established in 2018 we surveyed survivors of UK terror attacks (or overseas attacks impacting UK citizens) in order to better understand our collective experience and to provide the basis for our future work. In that survey of almost 300 survivors, media intrusion emerged as one of the major areas of concern.

Given the breadth of the initial survey it didn't provide much detail beyond the high degree of concern so to better understand the nature of the problem and of the views of survivors we embarked on a second round of research. This research has been led by survivors themselves and assisted by Kantar, one of the world's leading data and insights companies. Over the past two years we have spoken to and surveyed over a hundred survivors on their experience of the media. What follows is their story and their views.

The nature of the challenge

The survey and our discussions revealed two distinct areas of concern from survivors. The first is the most obvious and personal. The impact of media intrusion on them and their families, often in the immediate aftermath of the attacks.

The second area of focus is less about the direct impact of intrusion but a wider concern about whether the current approach to reporting on terrorism is actually playing into the hands of terrorists, perhaps even inadvertently encouraging attacks by providing the amplification and infamy they seek.

Before setting out the findings of this work it's worth making clear that none of the criticisms set out below mean that the survivors surveyed don't recognise and support the role of media organisations in reporting on the obvious public interest in terror attacks. Over half of survivors (52%) said they had also had positive experiences of working with the media. The debate is not about whether reporting on attacks is legitimate, it's a question of the responsibility inherent in that reporting and how far that is being upheld.

Why media matters

Terrorism targets individual innocent members of the public but the physical manifestation of the attack is a small part of the overall strategy. The central purpose of terror attacks is to spread fear and to divide societies. Indeed, the very reason that groups resort to terrorism as a tactic is because they don't have the capacity, ability or support to take on the state head on.

Spreading fear and sowing division is therefore the centrepiece of their strategy; the main objective to the attacks. In recent years this has become even more apparent and sophisticated, from Daesh burning their captives alive in order to share the shocking content, to the Christchurch killings being livestreamed online for audiences around the world.

Terror attacks translate into terror through three mechanisms. Firstly, by word of mouth transmitted by those affected or witness to attacks. Secondly via social media, transmitted by those filming or photographing the attack and sharing accounts online. Thirdly through traditional media coverage.

Personal transmission tends to be small scale in its impact reaching only a few degrees of separation from those caught up. Digital and traditional media is where terrorism achieves the scale it needs to spread fear. SAT will be researching the role of digital media in the coming months, this report focusses on the role of traditional media (though of course there is significant overlap between them).

Media coverage matters because it is a central objective of the attacks. As important – perhaps even more important – than the attack itself. How we balance the right of media organisations to cover such attacks while avoiding becoming unwilling accomplices in the objective of the attack is the debate we need to have and that this report seeks to further. Of course, we are aware that none of this is straightforward or uncomplicated. While some may argue it would be better if terror attacks didn't receive the oxygen of publicity at all – in a free society it would be profoundly wrong to stop the media covering it (outside very specific short-term security reasons). Terror attacks are of legitimate public interest and we would all expect them to be covered. Furthermore, good media reporting can help a society understand not just what happened but sometimes why and how it might be challenged in the future.

Alongside these macro policy questions of how we balance media freedom with media responsibility, the other reason that media coverage matters is because it has a huge impact on survivors themselves. This is perhaps more straight-forward. How coverage is conducted can be either a soothing balm on the psychological wounds or it can be a major part of the trauma and an unbearable intrusion into people's lives at the worst possible moment.

The question this report seeks to engage with is: while respecting the right of the media to cover these events, how might that be done in a way that respects survivors, reduces potential contagion and copycat attacks and makes future terror attacks less not more likely? It is those questions we have started to wrestle with.

Survivor's Experiences of Intrusion

Starting in 2019 and finishing in 2021 working with Kantar we surveyed **116 survivors of terror** attacks using a standardised set of questions online. This was supplemented with more **in depth one to one interviews**. We asked for views, experiences and details and in order to get wide participation we did so on the basis of anonymity.

Demographic breakdown

Gender

Male	25%
Female	75%
Other	0%

Age

Under 18	3%
18-24	7%
25-34	4%
35-44	22%
45-54	28%
55-64	21%
65-74	12%
75+	2%

Were you?

Injured in a terror attack	41%
Witness to a terror attack	49%
Relative of someone killed in a terror attack	26%
Relative of someone injured in a terror attack	9%
Someone else involved in an attack	5%

Location of attack

Attack in the UK	68%
Attack that took place overseas	32%

Those who responded to the survey included survivors or bereaved relatives from the following attacks:

- Tunisia
- Woolwich
- Manchester Arena
- London Bridge (2017)
- The Bataclan
- Isis kidnappings and executions
- Parsons Green
- 7/7
- Bali
- Westminster Bridge
- Brussels
- Fishmongers Hall

Key facts

Of the group we surveyed almost 60% of survivors had experienced what they perceived to be media intrusion:

Have you ever experienced media intrusion?

Yes	59%
No	41%

Almost half of this came within 24 hours of the attack, a period when its impact is most intense.

When did the first intrusion happen:

Within 24 hours of the attack	48%
24-48 hours of the attack	16%
The same week of the attack	16%
The same month as the attack	10%

Survivor's experiences of intrusion

As part of the survey we asked survivors to document what had happened to them. For some this was a painful process and in a number of cases survivors found it too difficult to share. However most shared open accounts of what happened, extracts of which we have reproduced here.

The exact nature of the intrusion varied greatly. From pestering and repeated phone calls to more aggressive and disturbing tactics. We have classified the examples as either: pressure and pestering, misrepresentation, invasion of privacy and, perhaps worst of all, taking the role of the police or family members in sharing news of bereavement. Their experiences are shared below in their own words (small edits have been made in a number of cases to avoid the identification of individuals).

Pressure and pester

The most common form of intrusion was the most basic. For most of those who reported intrusion it was pressure to talk or pestering from one or more journalists. While this may be at the milder end of the spectrum its impact on those affected was often augmented due to its timing.

While most of us are able to deal with unwanted calls in normal times, a barrage of them at a time when you have just been told of a devastating loss, or when you are desperately seeking information on the whereabouts of a child lost in an attack can be overwhelming. We heard from survivors that each time your phone rings you hope it's your loved one, or a hospital with good news, of the police with information. You have to keep your phone on in case your loved one is trying to contact you, but it rings every few minutes with another journalist demanding information.

In some cases the pestering tipped over into pressure. That took the form of door stepping survivors, approaching neighbours, old friends and colleagues. It included following survivors, pretending to be customers or officials. Social media accounts would be deluged

by 'friend requests' from journalists seeking information. In some extreme cases survivors had to engage lawyers to deal with the situation.

"Reporter had messaged a few hours after attack. On one occasion reporter threatened me to do a story and if I didn't they would write one anyway using info already out."

"Knocking on doors, workplace, tracking down friends, neighbours, local shopkeeper, basically anyone with any kind of connection was hounded."

"Messaged me about speaking about the attacks before I had even got home and seen my family."

"Constant phone calls/messages on social media"

"Cornered in airport"

"Home intrusion not only of myself but of family members & old neighbours"

"Blocked my street, followed me to school, misquoted and harassed my neighbours"

"Family members were inundated with requests to speak to me/ get my story. I've had journalists at my house and family members houses and friend requests over social media from journalists in order to get what they want."

"In Paris, I was in the hospital awaiting surgery. As the largest central hospital in Paris it was inevitably the focus for media. In fairness, the British media at the hospital were very professional, polite and respectful. French media were as much in shock and as distraught as the people they were there to report on. The Spanish, German and Australian media, however, were awful. Entering rooms (including mine, though I was not there at the time), phoning patient rooms, 'interviewing' survivors without telling them they were media. Generally hassling. Once I returned to the UK, the worst by far were freelancers - ringing the doorbell, being pushy, and pretending to be from the papers they clearly hoped to sell stories to. Facebook had nearly 100 friend requests from various journalists or producers. Also ones from the rest of the world - as far away as China. Easily ignored, but very weird. My sister was door-stepped by several journalists. Local paper where I grew up somehow contacted old friends from school, some of whom I hadn't seen in several decades. The comms dept where I work for was inundated with requests for comment. "

"Received direct messages on social media from a reporter, initially pretending to be sympathetic but as soon as I denied his request for an interview, he started harassing me and saying he could print whatever he wanted without his consent"

as I had just turned 18. We eventually had to get lawyers involved to prevent anything from being printed.”

“While in hospital in Tunisia I had a letter passed to me by my doctor from a journalist who wanted to speak to me. At this point, I had not even spoken to any of my family. I also, had articles written about me, about my time in Tunisia which were factually incorrect. I had a journalist who went to my mother’s house, before I had come back to UK and said they had information about me, they asked my mum if this was her daughter and showed her a photo, they then had no information about me. They sat outside her house and my mum was too worried to leave but she had to go to hospital. I had journalists phone my company to get information about me and write letters to the UK CEO to pass on their details. I had journalists come to my sister’s house and all her neighbours the days after the attack as they thought I lived there. When I left the inquest, I left by the back entrance and photographers were waiting outside to get a photo of me. I had journalists sent me emails, facebook messages and phoned me on my mobile to try and speak to me for a story.”

Misrepresentation

Beyond pressure and pursuit, some survivors experienced what they felt was active misrepresentation or felt misled. Some survivors felt that some journalists used the sense of confusion and chaos to bounce survivors into revealing information they didn’t want to.

“On two occasions I was asked to take part in an interview under the impression that I was talking about positive stuff relating to the survivors’ choir, but then without checking with me first, they asked me to comment on something relating to the case. The most recent was the interview with Shamima Baghum. I was very distressed because I had chosen not to listen to that interview, I was expecting to speak about a fundraising choir activity and they asked me to comment. It upset me for the whole week.”

“One news journalist quoted phone number to contact if you were involved. I thought this was a police appeal, it wasn’t, it was the journalist’s number”

“I had lots of phones calls asking for interviews after I did one interview for a local paper. One of the interviews I agreed to do, I was taken in a car by the journalist (I asked where I was going & they just said they were finding a good place to interview me) they pulled up on the road where Edgware road station is & then filmed my reaction walking up to it. I hadn’t been there since the attack. I had no control over the situation & my mental health was really bad then. I was extremely vulnerable & they completely took advantage to get a good story. “

“Various journalists called my workplace. One physically came to my work and asked for me, pretending to be a customer, and then barraged me with questions.”

Invasion of privacy

Several survivors felt that their privacy was breached following the attacks. Many resented suddenly becoming public figures when they had no wish to be. In some cases that invasion of privacy also included their young children.

“Bombarded with people approaching, mics in hand to ask her if she was there (arena attack). She was asked if she saw dead people. All 2 days after the attack when we went to St Anne’s Square. She wasn’t left alone.”

“Film camera and microphone shoved in my daughters face when clearly she was distressed and in a wheelchair wearing a hospital gown”

“We were talking to the police outside at our most vulnerable , I was injured , we were all extremely distressed and the photo was taken of us without our knowledge or consent”

“I was at Manchester Royal Children's hospital in with my daughter after she was badly injured in the Manchester Arena Attack and the press were knocking on the door at my home trying to talk to my son (who was only 16 at the time). Various newspapers and TV Channels contacted me & my husband and my son through Facebook, they also contacted my daughter’s school, my daughters’ dance group. They took photos from my husband’s Facebook without permission and printed the photos in the paper like they had done an interview with him. It was truly disgusting... It has taken 2 years for the media to finally leave us alone.”

Breaking the news to families

Beyond any of this, there is a disturbing number of cases where journalists have taken the role properly played by the police or family members in informing loved ones of their bereavement. In some cases children have been told of their loss by journalists. In other cases people have been told their loved ones survived by journalists when this wasn’t the case.

“Knocked on all neighbours doors trying to get information about my daughter and reported her death online before we had even had confirmation she was one of the ones murdered”

“When the terrorist attack happened the papers couldn’t name our family member who was seriously injured as they had not had an identification. They went to my mother’s house told her they had information on the injuries of her child but they would only tell her if she confirmed the identity of her child from a photo. My mother’s identification meant they could publish my family member’s name in the paper the next day. The information they gave my mother was extremely distressing and as it was on the same day that we had just found out

about the injuries and did not know the extent of the injuries. My mother was so distressed about the press outside her house she did not want to leave it even for medical care.”

“The press reported a family member was alive when in fact they had died on the day of the terrorist attack giving us all false hope.”

“As the Foreign office were so slow at informing us the press published details of family members death and injury before we were able to speak to family members or close friends. At some points it was a race to inform close family before they read it in the paper, especially as we wanted to break such distressing news in person.”

“The day after the attack reporters hiding behind cars outside house, eventually approaching us and asking for info. This was before family liaison confirmed my mother’s murder”

“My 16 year old daughter answered the door thinking it is the postman and a journalist wished her condolences on the loss of her brother. We were not even told officially he was dead until that evening, twelve hours after this intrusion. At the time of the intrusion my son was still lying dead on the arena floor.”

“Journalists sending photos of me covered in blood to family members for a reaction, journalists trying to get into my hospital ward to question me, and journalists ambushing friends at my school and online to ask questions about my background and life.”

“Reporters knocked on neighbours doors wanting information on my daughter, and they reported online that my daughter had been killed in the attack before we had formal notification of this.”

Impact

The amount and seriousness of some of this intrusion surprised us. It’s far from just being door stepped which can be bad enough. The intensity of the impact is a result of the seriousness of the intrusion and often of the proximity to their trauma. Here is the testimony of the survivors on the impact on their lives:

“Caused a lot of stress, anger and anxiety”

“Police presence for about a week outside the house. Police alarm fitted in the house which we had for a few months. Couldn’t go out without being bothered.”

“Permanent reminders of the night of the attack. I understand that of course it’s not something you can move on easily from, however the added intrusion definitely impacted well being.”

“It made me very anxious and upset, which impacted on my ability to engage with my family.”

“It was very scary”

“Was quite overwhelming”

“We were in shock, it was the morning following the attack when the calls and messages started. It was very insensitive and upsetting. I was there with my two young daughters and we were struggling to process what had happened”

“Very upsetting especially when you’re stuck in a foreign country and your family don’t know the extent of what has happened to you. I also felt very pressured to speak to journalists.”

“Felt pressured to speak. Was still in shock so just went with the flow. Regretted it afterwards but wasn’t in fit state of mind at the time to make rational decisions.”

“It made me, my family especially my children, feel very scared and intimidated, that strangers knew where we lived and they might be watching our house.”

“We felt betrayed, that a photo of us at our most vulnerable , could be sold abroad without our permission or even our knowledge”

“I couldn’t leave the house. Had severe anxiety attacks and couldn’t be left alone”

“It constantly goes on and unfortunately with events of terror, there is always interest in the events. I only do interviews through SAT now as i feel I am able to control these interviews. It’s when it catches you unaware that I get upset.”

“Upset me all over again. Made me really angry. Don’t think it affected my family any more than they already had been. Makes my angry to think about it all these years later. She obviously didn’t care about the effect on me.”

“We were in no fit state to see anybody, other than close family. We were paralysed with grief.

“Upset and unwanted pressure at a very difficult time. To them it’s a five-minute story or a small clip on tv and then they move on to somebody else with no concern of the repercussions”

“Made us feel unsafe in our home:”

“Anxiety, feeling the need to protect my husband’s body on the day it happened and challenging how the media groups were allowed to film in and around the hotel in Sousse. Protecting my son and husband’s family from the images and videos circulating. Needing to get the police to help manage the information being released. It’s not just the impact on immediate family but friends and those he worked with.”

“I was partially unaware due to the state of shock but my immediate family where very distressed some reading of her death online without me having chance to contact them first”

“it made me feel victimised and increased my anxiety.”

“I lost everything due to the impact it had on me. Losing my job, income, self esteem has been so painful for them. My husband had a heart attack a year later, i guess there were other factors but it didn’t help for sure. He exhausted himself worrying and propping us all up this has resulted in mental health difficulties he has. My family protected me I will forever be grateful but so guilty about how it hit them all. One simple error I made none of us will ever trust anyone ever again.”

“It made a very distressing situation so much worse. As mentioned previously my mum didn’t want to leave her home, it was a race to inform close friends and family members before details were printed in the papers. “

“The incorrect reporting of a family member being alive rather than actual dead gave false hope and made the news of the death hard to comprehend.”

“Horried, isolated, unable to go out of house for a period of time .”

“We found it very stressful, my daughter had a journalist turn up at her work. It was a very distressing time for us and the press intrusion just added to the mix. I had reluctantly agreed to speak on radio 4, having had my details passed to them by a friend, in the hope that the publicity may help to find our relative. It didn't, it unleashed the hounds.”

“Deeply upsetting, and more so at the time when I had not returned to UK and they were worried and didn't need the extra stress. In addition, the photos printed of me in the papers, were taken from my facebook page without my permission or when I was leaving the hospital in Tunisia. None of this I consented to.”

“It caused me stress and anxiety, it made it difficult for me to go about my daily life. I didn't even have the chance to process what had happened before I was being put upon to articulate things.”

“An already overwhelming situation made into a spectacle for the whole street . Couldn't leave the house for fear of being asked questions.”

“Being asked not to go to the house at the time they seemed to be talking and asking anyone for information in our area for information”

“Felt very secluded”

“Very claustrophobic”

“I was very upset that my daughter was told by a random journalist her brother is dead before this was even confirmed.”

“Incredible stress as this began to occur within 2-3 hours of the attack happening, and local journalists kept ringing the door bell until the early hours of the morning. Repeated calls also meant by parents could not get through to the Police for further details as they were always engaged declining calls from journalists.”

“My grief and loss seemed to be owned by the media and public. I didn't go out for weeks other than with my Police Family Liaison to complete tasks and be present when my husband was flown home.”

“I live in a rural gaming village and everyone knew my story and how everyone was killed.”

“Had felt that my home was a safe place to be and it took that away”

“As her death was announced before we had confirmation this caused a massive amount of upset to my family who were waiting desperately for news from me”

“It worried us that they would start to knock on the door”

“It made me feel a million times worse particularly as it occurred directly after the bombings as I stood outside the tube station prior to anyone helping or comforting me. I was disoriented and confused. I was not injured but had been in the same carriage as the bomb and the last thing I wanted to do was to talk about what happened.”

“Distressing and upsetting and just plain awful”

“Having to deal with lawyers and preventing the article from being printed greatly exacerbated the already existing stress and emotion that was still very intense just a few days after the attack”

Who was responsible?

We asked people who was responsible for the intrusion. In some cases this was very clear, in other cases it was freelancers working for a range of outlets and in some cases the respondent couldn't remember.

Given those limitations we have chosen not to name individual media outlets in connection to specific cases and not to share the data on how often they were individually implicated. Instead we are listing all those named by more than one survivor. This includes:

- the BBC
- ITV
- Ch 4
- Sky
- The Sun
- The Mirror
- The Mail
- The Express
- The Times
- Reuters
- The Press Association
- In addition local radio, local newspapers, freelancers and foreign media came up as groups.

As you can see from this, almost every major media outlet is named by at least two survivors and some were named in up to twelve different cases. Broadcasters were as likely to be named as print titles and local journalists as responsible as nationals and freelancers. This is not a problem unique to tabloids or freelancers or one or two outlets. This suggests there is an industry wide problem, it's not the case of a few bad actors but rather entrenched, system-wide expectations and priorities that encourage journalists to intrusively seek stories to the detriment of survivors and families. Any solutions must therefore be industry wide.

Getting help

We asked the survivors who had experienced intrusion if they asked for help. Exactly half of our sample did and half didn't.

Did you approach anyone for help to deal with the media intrusion?

Yes	50%
No	50%

Those who asked for help

Of those who asked for help most relied on the Police Family Liaison Officers (FLO's). These are police officers deployed to families who have been bereaved in attacks. Their role

in chiefly as part of the investigation but they often also play an advisory or support role and in many cases are seen as the only source of help. Their role was key for many families.

“Our police liaisons dealt with it “

“The police helped”

“Our FLO”

“Our wonderful and dedicated family liaison officer stepped in.”

“Our family liaison officer was there to give us support in every respect”

“After 24 hours I was given a FLO and she then took control putting a police car outside my house to prevent people approaching and knocking on the door. She also helped launch a official complaint against the online news report.”

In some cases FLOs were asked for help but were deemed to be unable or unwilling to help:

“We were ignored by the family liaison officers”

“We spoke to the police about it but were told that there was nothing that could be done”

“Our FLO gave us advice on what to do but ultimately said the press would keep bugging us until that got their story. We released a statement and asked to be left alone.”

“The Police told me they would help. But once I left their Constabulary area (where the incident occurred) a few days later and returned home they said they could not help now and refused to assist. We had no one else to go to, and obviously no preparation for or experience of this sort of thing.”

Others relied on help from specific organisations including the Peace Foundation and Hostage UK.

Some took matters into their own hands contacting specific outlets:

“I asked them to remove my details and not pass them onto anyone else. They were very understanding and did.”

“I knew of the media protocols because of my work, so could use the appropriate channels when home.”

Others relied on fellow survivors or family members

“I asked another survivor who was a bit older than me & she’d been doing a lot of media interviews. She advised me on how to handle it.”

“A family member stood outside and pushed them away”

“I received help both from friends who had previously worked in the media, and lawyers”

None of those interviewed mentioned the Independent Press Standards Organisation/OFCOM or appeared to be aware that there is a system that enables families to request an end to contact. This will be picked up in the recommendations.

Those who didn't

Of those who didn't ask for help, the vast majority explained they didn't know who to speak to or how to get help.

“Didn't know who to speak to”

“I wasn't exactly sure of who to approach”

“i didn't know it was possible”

“I wouldn't know who to ask for help.”

“Did not know who to turn to”

Others explained they didn't feel able to cope given their grief or that it wouldn't be taken seriously:

“I felt as if it wasn't something to be addressed or that I wouldn't be taken seriously.”

“Deep in grief”

“was suffering from PTSD”

“I wasn't really in the right frame of mind to ask for help.”

The positive

From the start of this project we were clear that the questions it raised were not black and white. Journalists have a responsibility to report and high-quality reporting can be an important part of debunking and undermining the rationales of terrorists, media reporting can show solidarity and provide a platform for the stories of people's lost loved ones. We asked survivors if they had any positive experiences of working with journalists and just over half said they had.

The Manchester Evening News was often cited as an outlet that covered the attack with sensitivity and showing care towards the survivors. One survivor talked about being invited in by the editor and them explaining their ethos and how they would approach things. That individual has gone on to work closely with the outlet.

SAT has also worked closely with media organisations on its different campaigning priorities from improvement to mental health to better security for the public. This shows the nuanced understanding of the survivors surveyed. They see and appreciate the responsibility of high-quality reporting and want to support this, alongside cracking down on the all too common worst excesses.

Did you have any positive experiences of working with the media?

Yes	55%
No	45%

Survivor's views of reporting

Alongside the personal questions of media intrusion we wanted to get the input of survivors into the wider set of questions regarding the reporting of terror.

We started with the question of whether and how much the media and politicians should use the name of the terrorists responsible for attacks. As shown below 35% felt they shouldn't use the names of the terrorists at all – following the example of New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern. Just over half felt using their names occasionally was appropriate but at present it's done too much adding to their notoriety. Only 9% felt the current focus on the individuals responsible should continue.

Views on reporting

The media and politicians shouldn't use the name of terrorist's at all. They should be forgotten. 37%

Using names occasionally is fine, but it's done too much and more should be done to avoid them gaining notoriety. 54%

Naming the terrorists and focusing on them is important and should continue. 9%

Next we asked about how media should deal with films made by terrorists showing their attacks. 83% of survivors said the media shouldn't show them. 16% that it was appropriate to show extracts and only one person that it was acceptable to show the whole videos.

In the aftermath of terror attacks, what is your view of the film footage that terrorists might have shared e.g. the filming of the killings:

The media shouldn't show them. It plays into their hands. 83%

The media should show censored extracts. 16%

They should feel free to show the full videos. 1%

Finally we asked about the 'manifestos' of the terrorists increasingly left behind for distribution after their deaths or imprisonment. Just over half (52%) of survivors felt journalists should not quote from or publicise such manifestos at all. A further 46% felt they could report the headlines/motivations, but not cover in detail or provide easy access. Less than 2% of survivors felt they should be easily available.

In the aftermath of terror attacks, what should journalists do about the 'manifestos' of terrorists:

They should make them easily available to the public to download. 2%

They should report the headlines of the motivation but not cover the manifesto in detail and not enable easy access. 47%

They should deny them the oxygen of publicity and not quote from or publicise the 'manifesto'.

52%

Conclusions and recommendations

This research has found that media intrusion into the grief and lives of the injured and bereaved is endemic across the media. Much of this happens when grief and shock is at its most raw. We heard stories where media intrusion played a major role in traumatising survivors and intensifying distress.

The type of intrusion varied significantly. At the relatively milder end it was a sense of harassment at a moment of profound vulnerability, but the extreme cases were all too common. In particular the cases of children being told by journalists that family members had been killed before their parents had been able to break the news, or others told their loved ones were alive when they had died.

As a country we owe survivors of attacks more decency than that. Of course there is a legitimate public interest in such attacks, but that doesn't mean survivors should be treated as fodder for news hungry journalists.

In theory there are safeguards in place to protect people from the type of intrusion we found. These are covered in two main codes, the Editors Code of Practice (for print media regulated by IPSO) and the OFCOM Broadcasting Code.ⁱ IMPRESS which regulates a smaller number of outlets also has its own code.

These rules are backed up by guidance and enforcement processes. IPSO for example publishes guidance on 'Reporting major incidents'. This document rightly identifies the risks of intrusion but provides no solutions to it other than 'taking care' and 'being sympathetic.'. It identifies the risk that even if each outlet approaches survivors sensitively – if they all do it will feel like being bombarded – but it offers no suggestion on how to deal with that.

IPSO also publishes a ten-page guidance note for survivors of attacks. The most useful tool of privacy notices isn't mentioned until page 9 of the document. It includes suggestions like:

“if you are being telephoned repeatedly you could change your answerphone message to say that you do not want to speak to the media and only personal callers should leave a message.”

Both guidance documents serve to highlight the risks and problems of intrusion but also the lack of serious safeguards on how to prevent it.

Beyond this guidance IPSO has a complaints process that in theory survivors could use to complain about breaches of privacy. It also has the ability to launch wider standards investigations into consistently bad conduct where that is evidenced.

However, for most survivors suffering intrusion a post hoc complaints process is of little value. The harm is already done, and for most survivors the idea of engaging in a complaints system while they are dealing with much wider trauma will be untenable.

As a result, the current safeguards are not working. Not a single survivor mentioned IPSO/OFCOM/IMPRESS the bodies theoretically responsible for preventing such intrusion by the press. That's not surprising. Survivors of attacks are not normally high-profile media savvy operators; they aren't expecting to become sudden targets of intense interest and therefore most have no idea what policies and procedures are in place. Furthermore, when the attacks happen they don't have the time, space or mental capacity to be researching media law. If we are to protect survivors of attacks from the abuses that are all too common something has to change. Below we set out recommendations for how things should change.

Recommendations:

1. There should be a voluntary agreement not to directly contact the bereaved and seriously injured for at least the first 48 hours following an attack. That period would give survivors time to deal with their immediate shock and make a decision about whether they would like to request a privacy notice be issued or whether they are happy to talk to journalists. Police Family Liaison Officers would be responsible for supporting this choice.
2. There should be a voluntary agreement not to carry pictures or images of the bereaved or seriously injured without family permission. There should be a voluntary agreement not to use pictures of family homes and not to congregate outside the houses of the injured and bereaved. Images of the deceased should not be used on the same page as any images (if used) of perpetrators.
3. In cases of malicious breaches, the Police (or a newly created Survivors Support Hub) should:
 - i. Publicly name those outlets engaging in harassment of survivors and complain on their behalf to the relevant regulators.
 - ii. Exclude those outlets from any arranged press briefings or interviews with the victims, survivors or their families under the police/clearing agencies care.
 - iii. Where UK freelance journalists and members of the foreign media not covered by UK regulations and guidelines are identified as having broken codes and acted in an unacceptable manner, consideration should be given to removing privileges provided for their work including the removal of their official Press Cards and accreditation. The Press Card 'Gatekeepers' - including the News Media Association (NMA) and BBC - should be encouraged to issue guidelines to freelancers as well as the Foreign Press Association (FPA) to its members working in the UK.
4. As mentioned, we recommend the creation of a Survivors' Support Hub, publicly funded, to provide independent information and support to survivors of terror attacks. The Hub would provide assistance and advice not just in the immediate aftermath of an incident but going forward. As part of their remit they would help survivors deal with the media. This, we feel, would be beneficial to both survivors and the media, creating a body trusted by both.

5. SAT are advocates of accurate and appropriate terror reporting to inform the public while avoiding unnecessary further trauma and distress for victims. SAT would like to work with IPSO, IMPRESS and OFCOM to agree and publish guidance that can then be incorporated by each outlet. Based on this editors and newsrooms should provide clear guidance to their reporters on what standards they expect to be upheld. These need to be explicitly reissued to anyone covering a terror attack as soon as they are assigned to it. Editors need to be clear that there is a zero-tolerance approach to breaches. Any freelancers selling stories on attacks need to be asked whether their newsgathering was in line with the standards expected before publication.
6. Police Family Liaison Officers need to consistently have the skills and knowledge to support survivors to deal with media coverage. Many already do an outstanding job. To ensure all have the best possible support media training needs to be a core part of their training. This should start urgently with the main five forces most likely to deal with large scale incidents. As part of this training, and until a wider reform is implemented (as set out above), FLOs should issue pro forma privacy notices for families as soon as they are assigned to them. One of the first questions asked by FLOs should be, “would you like us to issue a privacy notice on your behalf?”
7. We need a new system to confirm fatalities once families have been informed and have been able to tell their loved ones. This should be overseen by the FLOs and coordinated by the local police force. News outlets should agree not to report on their names until it is confirmed that loved ones have been informed – there is a recognition that this information would need to be provided in a timely manner.
8. The Editor’s Code of Practice should be strengthened to better cover news gathering as well as news reporting. Most survivor complaints focussed on news gathering techniques rather than specific pieces of coverage, yet the code is focused on coverage. The Editors’ Code Committee should look at the OFCOM Code and consider what from it can be adopted to bring the standards in line.

Reporting on Terror

On the wider question of media reporting of terror attacks the views of survivors were clear. Around 90% support reducing the focus on the terrorist’s names and identities. Over 80% say videos made by terrorists should never be shown even in part, and 98% agree that terrorist ‘manifestos’ shouldn’t be a high-profile part of media coverage.

What drives these views and the intensity of them is the determination of survivors to deny terrorists what they crave. As set out in the introduction, media coverage is not a by-product of a terror attack, it is often the main purpose. As such survivors, more than anyone, want them to fail.

Whether or not media coverage happens is not controllable in a free society, but the nature of the coverage is critical. In too many cases media coverage plays into the hands of terrorists by:

- Spreading fear: setting out the gory details of attacks, playing out images of attacks on loops, providing disproportionate coverage of terror attacks.

- Providing infamy craved by terrorist by telling their life story, putting their faces on every front page, even giving them brand names like the ISIS Beatles.
- Coverage can even inspire copy-cat attacks with clusters of attacks often following each other.
- Spreading their ideology by sharing their ‘manifestos’ and setting out their rationales.
- Treating attacks in an unbalanced way: white attackers are more often portrayed as lone wolves or having mental health issues, whereas minority attackers are more often portrayed as driven by an evil ideology. Kleinberg and McFarlane’s study of UK coverage of terrorism found the word terrorism was used more often than those reporting far right attacks.

None of this is straight forward, when does covering what happened tip over into spreading fear? When does reporting who did it tip into the infamy they crave? When does sharing why it happened tip into promoting their ideology? None of these are binary questions or clear judgements. But what is clear is that the current balance is wrong. OFCOM’s code include two sections pertinent to these questions:

Harm and offence

- ‘Violence, dangerous behaviour and suicide
- Programmes must not include material (whether in individual programmes or in programmes taken together) which, taking into account the context, condones or glamorises violent, dangerous or seriously antisocial behaviour and is likely to encourage others to copy such behaviour.’ (2.4)

Crime, disorder, hatred and abuse

- ‘To ensure that material likely to encourage or incite the commission of crime or to lead to disorder is not included in television or radio services or BBC ODPS. Material may include but is not limited to: content which directly or indirectly amounts to a call to criminal action or disorder; material promoting or encouraging engagement in terrorism or other forms of criminal activity or disorder; and/or hate speech which is likely to encourage criminal activity or lead to disorder ’ (3.1)
- ‘Material which contains hate speech must not be included in television and radio programmes or BBC ODPS except where it is justified by the context.’ (3.3)
- ‘Descriptions or demonstrations of criminal techniques which contain essential details which could enable the commission of crime must not be broadcast unless editorially justified.’ (3.4)

RUSI have recently been working with Counter Terrorism Policing to set out the evidence of the impact of media reporting on terrorism. They have published two reports in the last year that set out the evidence basis around the relationship between media reporting and terrorism and that set out some recommendations for Police and the Media.

Their literature review found that while questions of social contagion remain highly debated, there is stronger consensus around imitation i.e. that media coverage can motivate those who are already supporters of terrorism to act at that moment or to use particular methods.

Their main recommendations to the media were:

Establish internal written guidance to ingrain understanding of the issues before events occur. This cements behaviours before the additional pressures of time, social media and lack of verified information are added.

Conduct regular internal training/engagement sessions for reporters and editors covering terrorism. Use available resources prepared by journalists and academics for training and discussion, for example:

- IPSO guidance pages, covering multiple topics.
- UNESCO handbook for reporting on terrorism, providing recommendations from active event coverage to post-coverage reflection.
- The Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma website, with multiple resources for covering terrorism.
- The Tow Center for Digital Journalism report, providing recommendations for challenges around digital reporting and the impact of social media.

Prioritise protection of the brand. In an increasingly competitive consumer environment, media should view adherence to the Editors' Code of Practice and factual, objective reporting as good business strategy. Providing well-written and edited content to a loyal readership base will be more competitive in the long run than simply reposting or reusing unedited, easily accessible online content.

Engage in cross-industry discussion of the guidance recommendations given in Chapter III. The Society of Editors offers a good platform to host engagement seminars, roundtables and meetings to this end

Add a 'Terrorism' guidance page on the IPSO website highlighting terrorism-specific issues and impact. This should be part of a consultative process and include multiple perspectives, as this research project has done. This would provide easily accessible, non-prescriptive guidance which could be helpful to journalists as they are writing and editing stories on this complex topic.

When it comes to the guidance the RUSI report recommended it covered four areas: volume, content, sensitivity and impact.

We agree with these recommendations and think that within this there are some simple steps that media organisations can take while still carrying out their duty to report:

- Don't share detailed account of injuries, methods or gruesome imagery.
- Reduce the naming of the terrorists as much as possible, focus instead on those who helped survivors or the lives of the deceased (subject to the safeguards set out above).
- Don't reproduce photos of the terrorists or if you do minimise their use and profile. Separate their pictures from those injured and deceased.
- Do not share manifestos or videos made by terrorists.

These simple steps don't impinge on the ability of news organisations to report the news. But they would make a huge difference both to survivors but also in undermining the objectives of terrorists.

This new guidance should be drafted through a collaborative process between the media, survivors, the police and other key stakeholders. This process has to start now. Following publication of this report, SAT seeks to engage with the media and emergency services to discuss how to take forward the proposals outlined.

SAT's members believe that the public is sympathetic to these aims and would wish to see concrete action to create a system that while ensuring a free press can continue to carry out its vital work, it avoids creating increased distress and anguish to those already suffering.

ⁱ The Editors Code includes:

PRIVACY

- i. Everyone is entitled to respect for his or her private and family life, home, health and correspondence, including digital communications.
- ii. Editors will be expected to justify intrusions into any individual's private life without consent. In considering an individual's reasonable expectation of privacy, account will be taken of the complainant's own public disclosures of information and the extent to which the material complained about is already in the public domain or will become so.
- iii. It is unacceptable to photograph individuals, without their consent, in public or private places where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy.

HARASSMENT

- i. Journalists must not engage in intimidation, harassment or persistent pursuit.
- ii. They must not persist in questioning, telephoning, pursuing or photographing individuals once asked to desist; nor remain on property when asked to leave and must not follow them. If requested, they must identify themselves and whom they represent.
- iii. Editors must ensure these principles are observed by those working for them and take care not to use non-compliant material from other sources.

INTRUSION INTO GRIEF OR SHOCK

- i. In cases involving personal grief or shock, enquiries and approaches must be made with sympathy and discretion and publication handled sensitively. These provisions should not restrict the right to report legal proceedings.

The OFCOM Code includes:

Fairness

- 'Broadcasters or programme makers should not normally obtain or seek information, audio, pictures or an agreement to contribute through misrepresentation or deception. (Deception includes surreptitious filming or recording.) However: it may be warranted to use material obtained through misrepresentation or deception without consent if it is in the public interest and cannot reasonably be obtained by other means.' (7.14)

Privacy

- 'To ensure that broadcasters avoid any unwarranted infringement of privacy in programmes and in connection with obtaining material included in programmes.'
- 'Any infringement of privacy in programmes, or in connection with obtaining material included in programmes, must be warranted. In this section "warranted" has a particular meaning. It means that where broadcasters wish to justify an infringement of privacy as warranted, they should be able to demonstrate why in the particular circumstances of the case, it is warranted. If the reason is that it is in the public

interest, then the broadcaster should be able to demonstrate that the public interest outweighs the right to privacy.’ (8.1)

- ‘When people are caught up in events which are covered by the news they still have a right to privacy in both the making and the broadcast of a programme, unless it is warranted to infringe it. This applies both to the time when these events are taking place and to any later programmes that revisit those events.’ (8.3)
- ‘If an individual or organisation’s privacy is being infringed, and they ask that the filming, recording or live broadcast be stopped, the broadcaster should do so, unless it is warranted to continue.’ (8.7)
- ‘The means of obtaining material must be proportionate in all the circumstances and in particular to the subject matter of the programme.’
- ‘Doorstepping for factual programmes should not take place unless a request for an interview has been refused or it has not been possible to request an interview, or there is good reason to believe that an investigation will be frustrated if the subject is approached openly, and it is warranted to doorstep. However, normally broadcasters may, without prior warning interview, film or record people in the news when in public places.’ (8.11)
- ‘Broadcasters should not take or broadcast footage or audio of people caught up in emergencies, victims of accidents or those suffering a personal tragedy, even in a public place, where that results in an infringement of privacy, unless it is warranted or the people concerned have given consent.’ (8.16)
- ‘People in a state of distress should not be put under pressure to take part in a programme or provide interviews, unless it is warranted.’ (8.17)
- ‘Broadcasters should take care not to reveal the identity of a person who has died or of victims of accidents or violent crimes, unless and until it is clear that the next of kin have been informed of the event or unless it is warranted.’ (8.18)
- ‘Broadcasters should try to reduce the potential distress to victims and/or relatives when making or broadcasting programmes intended to examine past events that involve trauma to individuals (including crime) unless it is warranted to do otherwise. This applies to dramatic reconstructions and factual dramas, as well as factual programmes. In particular, so far as is reasonably practicable, surviving victims and/or the immediate families of those whose experience is to feature in a programme, should be informed of the plans for the programme and its intended broadcast, even if the events or material to be broadcast have been in the public domain in the past.’ (8.19)