

Hearst Networks: Compliance Guide for True Crime Podcasts

Legal and Regulatory Requirements

- ✓ Ensure all episodes comply with legal requirements, including:
 - Defamation
 - Privacy
 - Contempt
 - Reporting Restrictions
 - Copyright
 - Data Protection
- ✓ Adhere to Ofcom standards; refer to the [Ofcom Broadcasting Code](#)

Guidance on Revisiting Past Events & Minimising Suffering and Distress (Section 8.19 of Ofcom Code)

For true crime podcasts, it is important to reduce the potential distress to victims and/or relatives when making or broadcasting content intended to examine past events that involve trauma to individuals (including crime), unless it is warranted to do otherwise.

So far as is reasonably practicable, surviving victims and/or the immediate families of those whose experience is to feature in a podcast, should be informed of the content, even if the events or material is already in the public domain.” (Section 8.19 of the Ofcom Code)

With this in mind, here is a simple guide to minimise suffering and distress to victims’ families/relatives when revisiting past events:

- ✓ **Early Compliance Review:**
 - Send podcast scripts/episode treatments to the Hearst Networks Compliance Team for advice on victim notifications.
- ✓ **Case-by-Case Approach:**
 - Treat each story individually; notification processes may vary between cases.
- ✓ **Accuracy & Legal Checks:**
 - Double-check that all publicly discussed topics are accurate and fair.
 - Confirm that no information is subject to legal restrictions.
- ✓ **Notification Etiquette:**
 - Notify families/relatives about:
 - The purpose of the podcast
 - Distribution location
 - Release date (so they can choose whether to listen or avoid).

- **Do Not:** Request permission from victims to produce the podcast.
- ✓ **Exhaustive Contact Attempts:**
 - Use best efforts to contact victims' relatives/relations, e.g. using:
 - People Finder, Electoral Rolls, Social Media
 - Family Liaison Officers, Letters (via recorded delivery)
 - Record all contact attempts (e.g., keeping social media message records/sending recorded letters).
- ✓ **Avoid Vulnerable Contacts:**
 - Do not directly contact individuals under 16 or vulnerable persons. Refer up to Director of Compliance in these instances.
- ✓ **Consider Public Interest:**
 - Evaluate whether there is strong public interest to proceed with the podcast, particularly if:
 - Details are already available in the public domain.
 - Privacy intrusion can be mitigated (e.g. anonymising identifiable individuals).
- ✓ **Respect Concerns:**
 - If a family/relative opposes the podcast, refer to Director of Compliance and carefully assess whether it's necessary and justifiable to continue.