

Fuller Inquiry Manchester Seminar

Event: Fuller Inquiry Manchester Seminar Recording

Date: 12 October 2023

Speakers: Sir Jonathan Michael, Chairman
Jane Campbell, Deputy Secretary to the Inquiry
Rebecca Chaloner, Secretary to the Inquiry
Tim Suter, Facilitator
Kathryn Whitehill, Head of Investigations
David Wright, Eric Eyre Funeral Services
Carrie Weekes, A Natural Undertaking
Debbie Torrie, Deborah Ingham Funeral Service
Clive Pearson, Pearson Funeral Service
David Coulson, Regent Funeral Services
Natalya McLackland Regent Funeral Services
David Barrington, Barrington's Funeral Services
Claire Barrington, Barrington's Funeral Services
Ross Hickton, Hickton Family Funeral Directors
Nigel Lymn-Rose, AW Lymn Family Funeral Service
Paul Hilton, Paul Hilton Funeral Services
Sarah Jones, Full Circle Funerals

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: My name is Jonathan Michael. I am Chairman of the Inquiry. I

am joined here at the sort of top end of the table, as it were, by some colleagues, just introduce them now.

Tim Suter is a Partner in Fieldfisher here and is the Legal Advisor to the Inquiry. Rebecca is Secretary to the Inquiry and Jane there is Deputy Secretary.

Kathryn Whitehill here is heads up the Inquiry's investigation side of things. There are other colleagues around I will not introduce them, but they are basically recording you all.

The other thing that I have just been warned about, we need to warn you about, is that the mics are live all the time. So, if you want to do surreptitious comments about what is going on, we will have that nicely recorded.

I am very grateful for you coming along today. I recognise that you are all busy people.

As you know David Fuller committed some despicable crimes in the mortuaries at Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust. My role as Chair of this Inquiry is initially in Phase One to understand how Fuller was able to carry out these offences, and how he was able to do that for so long and undetected. And to make recommendations to the Government to prevent anything similar happening again.

Then in Phase Two to consider the procedures and practices in other settings where the deceased are kept to safeguard their security and dignity. To make recommendations to Government again to ensure across the wider Country that these issues are addressed. We are planning to publish Phase One report before the end of the year but have already started work on Phase Two looking at the wider issues.

The team sent out 4,500 questionnaires to people in the Funeral Care Sector. And we received a number of responses from people including from you sitting around the table here.

I know there are many places which take the responsibility to safeguard the dignity of the deceased very seriously, but yet there are in the media horror stories. You will remember from Press reports, in I think it was May 2022, Nigel Robinson-Wright, an undertaker from Blackpool posed for photos next to naked corpses and invited a man to undertake sexual activity in his mortuary. He was sentenced to 25 years in prison for sharing indecent images.

In November 2021 Sharon Howell, a Funeral Service manager from Ashton-under-Lyme left the deceased to decompose and defrauded the relatives. She was jailed for two years.

The deceased deserve to be treated with dignity by those who are entrusted with their care and no family should ever have to go through the hurt and trauma that families of Fuller's victims experienced.

As I say, I am very grateful for you attending this seminar and in doing so, helping the Inquiry gather evidence and to draw some conclusions to help keep the deceased safe.

My role here is predominantly to listen to you. My colleagues will join in the conversation, a little bit, to pursue questions and perhaps even challenge you where appropriate, but I am going to listen. At this point I am going to hand over to Tim who is going to explain as to how the session will run.

TIM SUTER:

Morning all. First let me repeat the thanks from the Chair for you all coming to attend this session. We know you are all busy and we

know that you all do difficult and sensitive jobs, so we are very grateful indeed for you setting time aside to join this session.

As the Chair has mentioned this is the first of a number of sessions that the Inquiry is holding to gather views for its Phase Two work.

There will be a further seminar with a selection of Funeral Directors held in London later this year. Seminars with other sectors involved in securing the safety and dignity of the deceased, both in hospital and non-hospital settings, will be held next year.

Before we get into the detail of the seminar, I would just like to set out ten housekeeping points. A lot of them will be straightforward but I just want to set them all out, so we know essentially the rules of how we are going to manage this seminar. There's obviously a lot of us here. Everyone is going to be given an opportunity to share their views, but we have got to do that in an organised way to make sure that we give everyone an opportunity to speak. This will ensure we can cover a wide range of topics in a relatively short space of time.

The aim is to elicit the best evidence we can from all of you.

As the Chair has said, I will facilitate the session which means I will endeavour to ask questions of each of you as we move through the topic areas. I had written here I will do so referring to you by name. I think I am going to struggle to do that, so I think I will encourage you to put your hands up and if you've got questions -- if you've got answers that you want to provide to us, please put your hands up and we will endeavour to come to you.

As the Chair has said the session is being recorded so, please only speak when a question is directed to you. When you are asked to speak, please say each time who you are and which organisation you work for. This is because we are going to produce a transcript of this

seminar, and this is going to help us ensure it is always clear on the transcript who is speaking.

If you are speaking too fast, if you are speaking too quietly, I will remind you that you are being recorded and to speak as clearly as possible. It can seem quite unfamiliar, which I am very conscious of, so just try to be as natural as possible. Speak up, speak clearly, give concise answers.

Please address your answers to the Chair. He is the factfinder; it is the Chair who is hearing the information that you can all provide. As the Chair said, he might sometimes have questions, so don't let that throw you off. We are asking for your help. Obviously, colleagues from the Inquiry have also been introduced and each of them may also ask you questions.

This is not a court. I think that is going to be obvious to all of you. We are not asking anyone to give an oath. We are not asking anyone to give an affirmation. But nonetheless, the Inquiry is a full and fearless search for the truth and that means the Chair expects everyone to answer questions fully and accurately. It is the only way we can ensure that the Inquiry does its job as best it can.

Tone: so, this is point seven, so I am getting there. It is important that we keep the seminar focused and professional. If things are veering off course I will intervene and I will bring us back on topic. We will obviously be discussing delicate topics. You are the experts and I know you are professionals used to dealing with the bereaved and sensitive issues. Please approach this seminar in the same way, respectfully and tactfully.

Language and terminology, point eight: these are obviously important and if we touch on topics that require details about what happens to a

person after death, the steps involved in death management, that is perfectly fine. We want you to be candid, but if you can flag if anything you would like to say will involve graphic or sensitive information.

Point nine, confidentiality: it is important that what we discuss here remains confidential. We don't want you to post anything on social media. We don't want you to publish articles or discuss this session with others. That is because the Inquiry's work is ongoing. We have still got a lot of people to speak to. We want to hear views of everyone not influenced by others.

Point ten, report: In due course the Inquiry will publish a report as the Chair has said, and that is still some way off, so we need space to work. The Inquiry may wish to use the information that is discussed today in its report. I say that so everyone is clear that the core purpose of this seminar is to assist the Chair and his information gathering so it may be used in the Inquiry's report on Phase Two. So, the sessions today; we have three sessions. So, I think you will all have an agenda in front of you, so I am not going to take you through that in any detail beyond saying three sessions. First one, which will start very shortly: What happens now? Second: Who is checking up? The third and final session: Does anything need to change?

I don't know whether we will have a break or not between them. We are conscious that we only have limited time, but we also want to maximise concentration, so, if we do think a break will be helpful, we will let you know, and it might be after the first session we have a short break. And by 'short' I mean probably no more than

five minutes because we have just got to make sure we crack on through things, but let's play that by ear.

Okay. Has anybody got any questions just on housekeeping before we start?

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: Fire alarm?

TIM SUTER: Fire alarm. Thank you, Chair, so there are no fire alarms scheduled for today. If you hear one it is a real fire alarm, and we will have to go out and muster outside. We have a fire marshal who will help tell us where to go. I hope that is not an issue.

Okay, session one: What happens now?

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: Nigel Lymn-Rose A W Lymn from Nottingham. I want to offer an apology because -- so, when the initial invitation was sent out to attend it did say if you couldn't attend then you could invite a colleague and there was no suggestion of confidentiality that we were attending. I approached the NAFD to see if anybody else was attending and only this week I've had notification of the timing for today which said it was confidential, we shouldn't notify anyone of our attending and we shouldn't notify or ask who else was attending or indeed release the details of anyone who is here today.

Quite clearly, I'd already put steps in motion to notify the National Association of Funeral Directors. I did update them on the information that, "Please remain quiet about the fact that I've contacted them, and I wouldn't be able to give them any feedback obviously". Thank you.

TIM SUTER:

I think that is fine, we understand, so thank you for letting us know.

What happens now? Session one.

I am just going to set the scene just to -- I would like to give you all just some context before I start asking questions. You might not agree with everything I say. That is fine. That is part of the reason that we are here so we can all engage, and we can discuss.

As the Chair said we are here today of the awful crimes of David Fuller. How they can be learned from so they do not happen again in any setting where there are deceased. That is obviously a view everyone here is going to share. The central question for us today is how best to ensure the dignity and security of the deceased in the funeral sector.

The Chair has already alluded to some stories that appear in the media from time to time about problems that occur in funerals or other places where the deceased are cared for. For example, bodies being stored incorrectly at a Funeral Home, so they decompose. Personal belongings not being disposed of in accordance with the wishes of the deceased. The correct deceased not being placed in the coffin. and Class A drugs being stored at a Funeral Home.

I recognise that these are the bad apples and that the vast majority of those, and no doubt everyone here, are those who work in the funeral sector because they wish to follow a vocation caring for the deceased and to the bereaved. No doubt it is a difficult and it is a demanding role.

According to a 2018 report into the funeral industry by the Competition and Markets Authority there were 616,000 deaths registered in the UK in 2018. According to the 2020/21 report of the All-Parliamentary Group of Funerals and Bereavement that figure

rose during the pandemic to 697,000 deaths registered in the UK in 2020. We understand there are estimated to be 7,000 Funeral Homes in the UK employing approximately 20,000 people.

In 2020 we understand the average cost of a funeral was estimated to be £4,300, and 2018 figures used by the CMA report estimated that the funeral industry was worth about £2 billion. We understand those figures would have undoubtedly been hit by the COVID pandemic.

It is clear the funeral industry is not only a large that plays a vital, often unseen role, it is a complex one.

Since the end of July 2022, the Financial Conduct Authority has started to regulate pre-paid funeral plans. Yet otherwise, there is no statutory regulation of the provision of funeral services in England, Wales or Northern Ireland.

In 2019 the Scottish government issued and consulted on a draft Code of Practice for Funeral Directors. Its purpose is intended to require Funeral Directors to adhere to good standards of care of the deceased and to provide transparency in the goods and services offered to the bereaved.

As we have already heard there are trade associations. There is the National Association of Funeral Directors, NAFD. The National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors, SAIF. Both have a system of quality assurance assessments. SAIF has published a Code of Practice. NAFD has helped establish the Independent Funeral Standards Organisation, IFSO, and that has also published a Code and Indicative Behaviours in April 2021, neither Code is mandatory.

The CMA report estimated that 25 per cent of Funeral Directors are not members of a trade association and therefore are not subject to

any type of inspection. We would like to know more about that 25 per cent.

The Chair of the Funeral Service Consumer Standards Review commented that:

"What has surprised me most is the lack of cohesion. I expected every firm in the sector to be working to the same set of standards and values. The lack of that has been a surprise."

Training for aspiring and current Funeral Directors is offered by a range of organisations. We understand there are diplomas available. The British Institute of Funeral Directors, for example, offers a Level Four Diploma in Funeral Directing.

We know that the Health and Safety Executive issue guidance on the management of infection risks when handling the deceased. There are obviously regulations on the control of substances hazardous to health. So it is with that background that we want to develop this discussion.

We have here today, I was going to say 13 organisations, I am not quite sure whether that is quite the right figure anymore. I think it is about 13, so everyone here are Funeral Directors and every organisation is a member of a trade association. We have a range of small family run Funeral Homes, multi-site Funeral Homes and those that are part of a large company. So again, welcome to all of you. To start I would just like to round the room quickly so everyone can say who they are which organisation they work for. So, if we start here and we work round that way. So, if you could please introduce yourself.

DAVID WRIGHT: David Wright, Eric Eyre Funeral Services in Sheffield.

CARRIE WEEKES: Carrie Weekes, A Natural Undertaking based in Birmingham.

DEBBIE TORRIE: Debbie Torrie working at Deborah Ingham Funeral Service.

CLIVE PEARSON: Clive Pearson, Pearson Funeral Service.

DAVID COULSON: David Coulson, Regent Funeral Services in Gateshead.

NATALYA MCLACHLAN: Natalya McLackland Regent Funeral Services in Gateshead.

DAVID BARRINGTON: David Barrington, Barrington's Funeral Services in Liverpool.

CLAIRE BARRINGTON: Claire Barrington, Barrington's Funeral Services in Liverpool.

ROSS HICKTON: Ross Hickton, Hickton's Family Funeral Directors, West Midlands.

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: Nigel Lymn-Rose, AW Lymn Family Funeral Service in Nottingham and South Derby.

PAUL HILTON: Paul Hilton, Paul Hilton Funeral Services, Stockport, Moss Side Local.

SARAH JONES: Sarah Jones, Full Circle Funerals in Yorkshire.

TIM SUTER: Thank you, so first question. I should say, so it is 10.50 am. We are going to try to wrap this first session up at about 11.30 am, if we can

possibly can, so we are going to try and move things forward relatively quickly.

Maintaining dignity of the deceased. How is the dignity of the deceased maintained when they are in a Funeral Home? For example, the use of shrouds, the use of dignity cloths, head blocks and any other measures and equipment.

I think first of all I would just like to understand how do you, as a group of professionals, maintain that dignity? I don't know if anyone wants to go first and just explain how they go about that and then others can obviously chip in. I don't know if anyone wants to put their hands up or I am happy to select someone. Yes.

NATAYLA MCLACKLAND: Natayla McLackland from Regent Funeral Services. At Regent Funeral Services I used to work in mortuary and I'm a qualified APT. We understand obviously bringing someone from a hospital, for example, into our clinic, so I took practices from mortuaries and applied them to our Home as well. For us we always do things in pairs, so everybody has got to have their identification checked. And then what we do is we assess the deceased. What are their needs? Because for us they are still human beings, still a person. So, does that person need some sort of topical cream to help their skin? Does that person need to still be wrapped in a sheet or be shrouded. A head block, absolutely each time, just to make sure that they're comfortable. So, I would start off, we just make sure that the deceased is covered, there's modesty there, the same as when we're getting them ready. Or if they're embalmed, use modesty covers depending on that person. And I would just begin there and that's what we do.

TIM SUTER: Thank you. Does anyone else want to come in on that? Is there anything else that anyone does to maintain the dignity. Yes.

CARRIE WEEKES: Carrie Weekes, A Natural Undertaking. We do very similar things. We have not just a checklist but a mortuary -- when somebody is in our care, they have got a record that goes with them but it's not just a checklist, it's a narrative. So that a family -- who've asks us what we've done or what we would like to do or questions that they'd ask me, are part of the conversation and that's all recorded. So, we've got a story of the person who's come in to us.

But some of our work is compromised by the condition of the person when we receive them. If there are delays in collecting somebody from a mortuary because of registration issues, which has been happening loads recently, it could be sort of a week to 10 days before we are able to look after that person.

And quite often, in some conditions they won't have been looked after to the same standard as we would like to be looking after them. And that can lead to difficult conversations with families.

TIM SUTER: How does that impact on dignity? What is the trade-off between the integrity of the deceased and dignity, if you can explain that?

CARRIE WEEKES: Can you define dignity?

TIM SUTER: So, dignity is, and others please chip in, but if a body is not clothed, is naked and you can see the genitalia, how do you ensure that the body cannot be seen? But we understand that if you cover a body

with -- put a body in body bag, for example, that will increase the speed of the decomposition. How do you manage those two perhaps quite juxtaposing positions?

CARRIE WEEKES: We have to make a decision about the kind of environment in which people are working as well as the needs of the family whose person we are looking after.

We have got a kind of the rationale which is clean and tidy. So, we like to ensure that everybody -- I suppose the equivalent is dignity, which is about making sure that each person is treated individually. So, in terms of very practical things, if somebody arrives in a body bag from hospital, which quite often happens, and they've been in that body bag for maybe 10 days they will be wet.

I am being as -- you said to be open about this.

TIM SUTER: Yes.

CARRIE WEEKES: They will be wet. They will be starting to maybe decompose quicker than if they hadn't been in that body bag. So, we would do everything we can sort of wash and make sure that person's dignity is maintained by taking them out of that bag.

In some instances, we are not able to take them out of that bag because it will impact on the environment in which we are working.

REBECCA CHALONER: Tim, can I just come on a follow up to that? Sorry, for the recording it's Rebecca Chaloner, the Secretary Inquiry.

How would you define dignity?

CARRIE WEEKES: I think we all define dignity slightly differently and to never assume. So, I am always really honest, we are always honest as a company with families about what we are capable of doing. We don't do any embalming, so we always explain that to families. We are not going to pretend that something's happening that isn't happening. So, we will have difficult conversations with families and make sure that we're getting their consent for anything that we do to their person. We feel like we're in a relationship with those families to ensure that --

It's almost like they define dignity. For some people dignity is being washed and dressed. And for some people they don't want -- their mum's been messed around with enough. That's quite a common thing. They've been in hospital. They've had all of this. They actually just want their person left now, "Just please don't mess with her anymore".

So, it's really a conversation constantly, which is why a kind of checklist, and a set of standards is quite difficult across the board.

TIM SUTER: Does anyone else want to come in?

DAVID BARRINGTON: Yeah, so similar to Carrie to that we have a Care Journey. So, when the person arrives with us, we note down any significant issues regarding the condition of the deceased person, so that we know where we're starting from.

We do embalm, with permission, if the family want us to do. But I think there is something regarding decomposition. I mean we do have to be clear that the deceased -- naturally decomposition starts at

the moment at of death. So, people do start to change very quickly and sometimes quicker than others.

Some people don't change at all. Some people do. And we have to be aware of that. And as with Carrie, even with embalming, we have to have difficult conversations sometimes. Families imagine that when you embalm someone that some magic happens, and things completely stop. That's not the case. Embalming somebody is a short-term preservative, it slows things down.

So, the other ways that we can slow things down, we can use refrigeration, that's another way of helping someone stay as dignified for as long as possible. But sometimes there is a point where you have to have a conversation with a family and say, "Do you really think that your mum or dad -- at this point would still want you to see them?"

And of course that is hard, that isn't what we want to do. But sometimes you have to have that conversation.

TIM SUTER: Yes?

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: Nigel Lymn-Rose. Yes, very much what is being said here is what happens in our own case. But I think there are a few points that are really salient.

Our view really is if you do what will be acceptable if it was a member of your own family, or if the family were watching you, that's a very good rule to get yourself on the right avenue and to be training people with new staff.

But I think one of the problems we have is we're here talking about to some extent what David Fuller did. But I get really, really

concerned -- when I started 50 years ago, a death on a weekend, we would routinely have the funeral that week. We would routinely have the doctor's papers and the necessary papers and registration dealt with within 48 hours. And we could then do the treatment and that was -- different on whether embalming is a good thing or not, but in our case, we embalm for the benefit of the family and we talk to the family about it. But what is so often misunderstood is embalming will stop the process at the point at which you do it. It will not actually undo what has happened before that process. It is very much more difficult to embalm a body once there has been a long passage of time.

And when we talk to the authorities, because families now are very often looking to have funerals at a further time out to find a day and time that's suitable for everyone. Again, if I go back 50 years, if families were on holiday from Nottingham, they were at the coast, they could get in a car and drive back for a funeral on the Thursday. Now if they're in Tenerife, they can't. There is a much greater emphasis put on people's other commitments and families look for a longer time for funerals. But equally we have the authorities that are making funerals become further and further and further away.

and during that time we can do nothing simply --

TIM SUTER:

If we bring that back to dignity versus delay versus decomposition, how do you manage all of those competing pressures that are on all of you? And make sure, that as you have said, if the ethos is on treating this person like they are a family member, there are challenges there. We have heard that a body may decompose at

different rates, but everyone would want to make sure that the dignity of that deceased is maintained.

So, if you just take us back to that and explain how you as a -- what is your understanding of the trade-offs and how still maintain the dignity?

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: I think the first thing I will say is we get a lot of upset amongst the staff when we see what appears to be unnecessary delays. We can't even speak to the coroner.

TIM SUTER: But bring it back to dignity. What do you do to maintain dignity?

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: Well, the problem is this is all part of it because we are getting to the stage where we move from a hospital and the deceased person is already decomposed for no good reason, just because of the passage of time. And that inevitably effects the dignity of the deceased because our view is we talk with families and many families will say, "Actually, we don't want to see dad again. But he would like him to be dressed that he wore at his daughter's wedding. And he was always very smart".

And you want to do that presentation even though the family are never seeing him, you want that presentation. And when you can't do it, when you can't do that and you have got to talk to the family about it, it is really very, very distressing.

And my view is that we get more problems now because of delays in the process. I mean you talk to the GRO; it is routine now --

TIM SUTER: Who are the GRO?

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: The General Registry Office. It is the law you have to register them within five days. You cannot get an appointment within five days, even when you have waited.

TIM SUTER: Shall we bring in others?

KATHRYN WHITEHILL: I have a question.

TIM SUTER: Sarah, I see that you had your hand up.

SARAH JONES: I do.

TIM SUTER: If we get to you and then we will bring Kathryn in.

SARAH JONES: Sarah Jones, Full Circle Funerals. A couple of quick things. One is just a quick challenge to the whole team on language because I think there are others in the room who also would not use the word "deceased" because it's immediately quite dehumanising, in my opinion. And then we start the process of what are we framing this relationship for this person as. So that's just a little thing to throw in.

TIM SUTER: What terminology would you use?

SARAH JONES: We talk about "a person who has died, a person in our care, mum". We don't just reduce the person down to their deceasedness because we kind of feel --

TIM SUTER: Yes. Thank you.

SARAH JONES: You asked about -- I don't have a definition of dignity. I wouldn't even begin to attempt to.

What we have is we have a Care After Death Guidance document and in that I have tried to specify every single event or moment that we might experience in somebody's journey after they have died. And then depending on what that looks like there is some clear guidance about how we would define best practice, because as you have already stated there is no defined definition of best practice. So, I have decided what I think is best practice with my team and we have documented that.

And we have separated that into what you can do before you have a medical certificate, what you can do after a medical certificate but pending green form what you can do post green form.

TIM SUTER: What's green form?

SARAH JONES: So that is when the death has been registered. So, you can't do -- again there are no laws about this but in my opinion, you can't do invasive procedures. Again, the definition of "invasive" is not clearly defined.

TIM SUTER: If you could just give an example of what "invasive" is. Is that embalming?

SARAH JONES: So, my definition, but there will be others who have others. So invasive is embalming, pace-maker removal, deep brain stimulator,

that kind of -- so that's something where you are opening the skin to remove something or embalming.

We talk about specialists as everything that you would do to a dead person which you would be highly likely to do to a living person under any normal circumstances. And then personal care is something that you would do to somebody who is alive.

So that is how we've kind of defined the different aspects of how we care for people after death and how that relates to the paperwork.

TIM SUTER: Thank you.

SARAH JONES: So not so much related to dignity but that's how we --

TIM SUTER: That is helpful.

SARAH JONES: And with the Coroner, if the coroner is delaying for four or five weeks, if there are things that we would like to do but in theory we should not do because there is not a death certificate we talk to the coroner and we say, "We've got significant concerns about what's happening to this person in our care. With your permission we would like to do X, Y and Z". And in the majority of cases, they agree that it's acceptable for us to do that.

So, I guess in an extreme example, if there is an infestation, we would like somebody maybe to go into a disaster bag if that's appropriate and then the coroner would --

TIM SUTER: And a disaster bag is a body bag, isn't it?

SARAH JONES: Yeah, like a seriously souped-up body bag basically that keeps everyone else in our care safe. And then one really quick other thing to say, because you said you're looking for evidence. So, with the University of York, we have done two pieces of research.

TIM SUTER: And you have shared that with us, so it's really helpful.

SARAH JONES: Yes, good, because that surveys Funeral Directors about what they define best offices as which --

TIM SUTER: With Dr Julie --

SARAH JONES: Exactly, yeah. So, if you wanted those survey results, I'm sure if you contact Julie.

TIM SUTER: We will perhaps come back to you separately about that. That's really helpful. If I just go to the end and then come back to Kathryn, so if you just want to say your name.

DAVID BARRINGTON: David Barrington. So just one comment on what Sarah just said first. With Coroners it's totally on the coroner. The coroner reports to the Crown. Each Coroner has completely different views about what they do depending on the coroner you're dealing with. I would imagine that Nigel would say his Coroner is very different with that approach. Going back to Carrie and sort of again talking about length of time when we pick somebody up and care of the deceased before they get

to us. So, in the past there would have been a thing called Past Officers so nurses would have washed the person who has died, they would prepare them for their next, onward journey. Lots of places that doesn't happen at all. So, an example of this, I will give you an example of a gentleman we picked up last week who we collected with a full catheter bag attached from the mortuary, in very bad condition. He hadn't been -- he hadn't passed away very long. And, you know, when we collected this gentleman, it was apparent that the mortuary technicians hadn't opened the body bag at all. So, they hadn't looked at the man. He had come into our care and then we have to react to that, we have to respond to that and try and recover some dignity for him.

Prior to that actually from the point of death the onward journey in the hospital up until he comes into our care, nothing's happened to him at all, and actually, nobody's cared. And that's a really sad situation from the medical profession which is supposedly a caring profession. And we find this a lot. If the person who passed away in hospital was a Coroner's case or possibly being referred to the coroner, the person when they come into our care will have everything still attached. Tubes, intubation tubes, all those things. Nothing will be removed when they come into our care. Again, that's something that then we have to react to, and we have to deal with.

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: Can I just ask whether that's a requirement? Is it from a Coroner? Is that a local issue? Or is that a regular requirement?

DAVID BARRINGTON: It's a requirement until the coroner releases the body. So, when the person is in the jurisdiction of the coroner, they wouldn't want

anything to be touched. Because if the case goes to postmortem, then it's effectively the body is treated as evidence, so they won't --

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: What I am understanding is that you would normally expect then the mortuary staffs to remove those hospital-based tubes and things like that.

DAVID BARRINGTON: That's what we would like to happen. Yeah.

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: Like or expect?

DAVID BARRINGTON: Expect.

TIM SUTER: Can we just bring in Kathryn just for her question?

KATHRYN WHITEHILL: I have been waiting for a question. So, it is right back to Natalya's point at the beginning actually. So, when Tim was introducing it, he was asking questions about the use of shrouds, the use of modesty cloths and you gave an answer, Natalya.

Now you have to forgive me. I've got very little experience of what happens when bodies are released after death, apart from my own family, what's happened there, but you don't know the intricacies.

So, Natalya, going back to what you said that you use either sheets or shrouds or modesty cloths, are you saying that the dead person is never left uncovered apart from when you're doing a particular procedure? Could you just describe that, please?

NATAYLA MCLACKLAND: Absolutely. Natayla McLackland from Regent Funeral Services.

So yes, absolutely you should never, ever have nothing on them.

For example, we do the Calms(?) contracts in our area where people who have sudden death in the community, and we go to those people. Some people could just have pants on and no top or vice versa. They could have underwear on, that is covering them. But to me that is a naked body. Everyone, everyone gets a shroud.

Everyone gets a sheet. Because that sheet is not just for modesty but also helps with other things.

Sometimes bodies leak and that helps obviously provide and keep that maintained. Working in mortuaries before, I've seen it when they haven't been looked after properly and that leaks on the person below, so there is these things that actually help.

And obviously again as I've expressed it's just people opening the fridge doors and especially in mortuaries, you don't want to be presented that somebody's lying there, and you get that shock and that does affect people as well.

I think what I would just like to touch upon please, is just a couple of things, just from what David said there. The lines are kept in a lot of the times from mortuary technicians. It's a policy for one of our mortuaries because if they were to remove the lines then there could be that leakage. So, they would prefer that the Funeral Directors take that person back and give them a better looking after than probably what we could at the time. And additional to that I think when you talk about dignity it's very important about a premises in which that dignity is being done.

TIM SUTER: And that's a good segue to move onto Security. I would just like to move things forwards.

So, we know that in the context of David Fuller, security is really important and is really relevant. We would like to understand how the funeral profession, Funeral Directors' profession ensures security. For example, the use of CCTV. Fridges, are they locked? Going back to CCTV, is it inside? Is it outside? Do you have concerns about CCTV? Inside doors, external doors locked. I'd hope for everyone that's probably a "Yes". Internal doors locked. Are the deceased tracked when they're moved?

You have all talked about the journey. I'm very conscious I am still referring to "deceased". So, I need to reflect on my use of language. Is there an entry log for staff? Is there an entry log for visitors? All of those things we would like to understand how you, as a profession, deal with them. What works? What doesn't? Costs, is that an issue? I have thrown a lot out there, but I would like someone to go first.

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: Can I just add to the things for you to think about? I think, David, you mentioned fridges as though they were, not optional, but one of the options for you as opposed to routine to store deceased people in fridges. Can I just gather from you whether fridges are routine practice or whether it is not always routine?

DAVID BARRINGTON: David Barrington. So, we tend to refrigerate until the person goes into the Chapel for viewing. So, refrigeration is used first then if the person is being embalmed, we embalm and then we use the Chapel. So, it's both.

TIM SUTER: And others? I want to bring others in who haven't spoken yet. Yes?

ROSS HICKTON: Yeah, same, the deceased is placed straight into refrigeration from point of death or collection from hospital. They're kept in refrigeration unit until they're prepared, in our circumstance. Then once they're viewed, they're placed back into refrigeration each night and not left out in the Chapel of Rest or viewing rooms, to maintain that dignity that they are in a safe and secure location. And they're being refrigerated, as best as possible to preserve their integrity.

TIM SUTER: And refrigeration, are we talking a cold store? Are we talking individual refrigerator per deceased person? Yes.

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: Nigel LYMN-Rose. In the hospital environments now, it tends to be a cold room with racking, tends to be. A walk-in cold room.

TIM SUTER: For Funeral Homes?

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: In Funeral Homes it tends to be individual trays within -- behind a door, so you'd open the door and there would be three or four trays visible. But in our own case we took a view that it's actually easier from a Health and Safety point of view for the staff to use cold rooms for what we see as temporary storage. And it's temporary storage really until such time as we get the clearance to be allowed to embalm or prepare for viewing. So, it slows down that decomposition until that point.

But there is a difficulty, and I don't want to disagree with my colleague here, but there is a difficulty with putting a coffin with a person in into

a cold room overnight and bringing it back into the Chapel of Rest or a viewing room, visitation room, on the day because you get condensation.

And actually, condensation on a person on your mum or dad or whoever, is a concern for people coming to pay their last respects or coming to spend time with other members of family.

So, our view is slightly different, our view once is we are ready and prepared, unless there is some good reason or some deterioration that we cannot prevent, we -- once they are moved into the Chapel. We wouldn't be moving back in and out of the cold room.

TIM SUTER: Okay, CCTV. Inside? Does anyone have a view? So, inside all areas of the funeral home. So that may be the Chapel of Rest. That may be the cold store, and refrigeration. We would be interested to understand, is that something that's a good a thing? Something that causes concern? A few hands. Yes.

CLIVE PEARSON: Clive Pearson. The only concern I would have would be if someone could hack in there, that you could see something you didn't want to. That is the only concern I have. Apart from that I would have no concerns about having cameras inside.

TIM SUTER: Okay. Others?

ROSS HICKTON: Ross Hickton. We have multiple funeral homes, multiple mortuary locations. We have CCTV in every single mortuary. We have a large cold storeroom in our head office which has CCTV as well. Our

security systems have a firewall so it would be very difficult to hack in, I hope.

The reason we have the camera system in place- lone workers - we have individual members of staff when we're preparing the deceased to make sure that the staff are preparing correctly, they're behaving in the mortuary. That if there's any issues in the middle of the night for instance the cameras are alarmed so they can set a trigger off, we can view the cameras to make sure there's not a burglary or something is happening during the night which we need to know about.

Another circumstance is, and this goes back to I suppose, dignity to the deceased to a degree. We had a situation where we were undressing the deceased, the clothes were soiled so they went into a clinical waste bag.

Unbeknown to us the family were actually expecting those clothes to be returned even though they were soiled. We advised against. We were able to actually find the footage, find the moment that the deceased was prepared because it's all logged, monitored with dates and times stamps.

And literally follow that member of staff on the camera going to the clinical waste bin to find the exact batch and retrieve those clothes. So, we were able to actually overcome an issue and give family peace of mind that we were able to retrieve their loved one's clothes. I know that's not for everybody. And in our opinion, they shouldn't have had the soiled clothes back, but ultimately, it's the family wish and what they want. And we were able to fulfil that wish afterwards.

TIM SUTER:

Okay. There were some hands over here as well. Yes.

DAVID WRIGHT: Yes. David Wright. We built a new mortuary pre-pandemic, and we had some issues with a refrigerator, so we installed a temporary CCTV camera to look at the temperate gauge to make sure it was on. That's at a level above, you know, so it's above sort of head height and upwards.

With this Fuller Inquiry then started, we have kept that in there at the moment. So, you don't any deceased, but you do see people coming in and out of the mortuary. And obviously it is the fridge controls.

TIM SUTER: Okay, thank you.

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: Can I just ask perhaps relative, can the people that have got CCTV in some form, just to raise their hand to get a feel for how common it is.

TIM SUTER: So just for the transcript that is 11, I think, so 11.

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: 11 out of 12.

SARAH JONES: No, I'd like to ask a question about it, if I may.

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: Right.

TIM SUTER: I think if we just go to this gentleman first.

DAVID COULSON: Yeah. David Coulson, Regent Funeral Services. We at Regent's, we have -- outside the building it's all camera'd up. We are actually

privileged to be situated within a park, we're in the council owned park so on a nighttime there's two sets of gates that anyone would have to get through anyway which are locked.

Our staff are all issued with key fobs, everything on our back of house is maglock, so magnet locked. Every key fob is registered with that individual. It comes up on the system to say who's signed in, when they signed in and what door they've activated.

The front of the building has security cameras as well. And like everybody else says, we very much -- everything's all documented, the journey of that loved one who comes into our care. And fridges, we do have one -- we do have locked fridges as well.

TIM SUTER: Individual locked fridges?

DAVID COULSON: Yeah, it'll be a bank of fridges. So, like I said, where you'd open the door, the individual trays. But that door is lockable.

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: Can I just ask? Do you look at the data which your system has in terms of when key fobs are used and looking at CCTV? Or do you use it only if there is an issue that you want to explore?

NATAYLA MCLACKLAND: I think with CCTV and anything like that it has to be strict policy and procedure, because it can't just be that anyone can go and have a look. At Regent, I am the manager. And when I even have a look, and I need to, I have someone witness what I'm doing. Everything comes in the logs, so I know exactly who's tagged, in what area, where they've been, when they've come out, who's put the alarm on, who hasn't. And I think what's really important about the

system that we use as well, which possibly could account every day for our case is that I can restrict everybody. Someone doesn't work nights, then I can restrict their fobs to get into the building and so on and so forth.

But yes, we have that logged. The CCTV, we generate each month, but everything goes through a security system, and they hold them over a firewall, so they're protected.

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: I am still not certain whether you routinely look at your data or whether it is only reactive.

NATAYLA MCLACKLAND : Possibly more so reactive. I wouldn't go in search for something that wouldn't be needed. I'd like to think of data protection and it's unnecessary to do certain things, but it doesn't mean that policy and procedure couldn't be put in place, or check once a day just to make sure everything is in order.

Everything can always be improved. But yes, I would admit that it's probably more reactive that I would check that. Or if I've got new staff coming in or new staff leaving, or somebody's wondering where their fob was, you know, then that would be ...

TIM SUTER: And you --

SARAH JONES: I was just interested in whether the families that you're supporting know that you have CCTV in your mortuary?

TIM SUTER: So, I think if we just put that out there rather than -- because I am just conscious of --

SARAH JONES: Yeah, well I think that because that's the reason we, well, we don't have --

TIM SUTER: I think it raises the question why are we asking about CCTV? Why are we asking? What do you think these measures are necessary for?

CLIVE PEARSON: Clive Pearson, Pearson Funeral Services. So, ours is more for managing people, people entering, so you don't actually see the deceased anywhere, so it's just so I can see who is going in who is going out.

SARAH JONES: Just also the point that I would say with 100 per cent confidence think this does not reflect the funeral industry in its entirety, if you've got 90 per cent of people with CCTV will not reflect the funeral industry.

TIM SUTER: Okay. Any other measures, security measures? I know that you had a --

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: Nigel LYMN-Rose. I just want a clarification because I thought you said who had got CCTV on their premises. And I think the answer you've taken is as though people have got CCTV in their mortuary.

TIM SUTER: I think I asked both --

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: -- I would say, "Yes", to on my premises but not "Yes" in my --

TIM SUTER: That's fine. I think that's something we can come back. I am keen to move forwards. Can we move on to the next topic?

So, visitors to your funeral homes. That might be visitors who are bereaved, that might be contractors, that might be others who have a reason to visit. I don't know, a doctor completing a crem form. What are your policies?

How do you ensure that those visitors can carry out whatever they need appropriately that you can ensure the security and the dignity of the deceased?

I don't know whether anyone wants to start off on that. Yes?

NATAYLA MCLACKLAND: Natalya McLackland, Regent Funeral Services. So, we have contractors' logs, and we have chapel logs and visitor logs so if they want to come and visit the Chapel, they sign in, they sign out. If we have had contractors that come, they sign in and sign out. We do a closed-door policy so you can only come to our funeral home by appointment because we have a lot going on. And we find that that's safer. And if anyone was to come in our premises again, areas that they shouldn't get into, can't because they've got to have a key fob to do that.

I think it's important that when anybody comes onto your premises they have a badge, an identification. For example, we had a chap, and he come to fix a light and he was supposed to be with the council. And he wasn't in council uniform. I asked to see his ID. Said he didn't have one. He said, "Well, you can ring my boss if you like", I said, "yes you will because I need to know who you are because you're coming into a very sensitive area". And I did just that.

And he did, he went away, he came back, and he had his ID. But if you use outside organisations as well, "What time are you coming? Who is it that comes?" And ensure that somebody is on site at all times, and we supervise a lot of people, especially for work in the mortuary as well, we wouldn't leave anyone alone.

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: Can I just check whether they are ever left on their own? Or are they always accompanied while they are doing whatever work, contractual work?

NATAYLA MCLACKLAND: So, a lot of the time that they would actually be accompanied by someone, or someone in eye/earshot of them. We would never leave somebody alone at all.

We had a policy where one of our alarm systems went off for example. The council had decided to inform me that that company to come in and check the building. Straightaway I said, "Well no, I don't know who this person is". So now our new policy is, that because they can just walk through the building and they can do anything, and I can't stop that, so if I don't have CCTV in certain areas, then there's a flaw.

So, then I put in, "Please. Right, okay then. So, if you get called out for the alarms you ring me, and I'll come out and ..." and you always send a member of staff.

Somebody who is in a funeral setting, a mortuary setting, it's a specialised area. And only people who are specialised should be there. It shouldn't just be anybody who can just gain access. So that's why I would never leave someone alone.

TIM SUTER: Okay, this lady at the end. I think you had your hand up.

CLAIRE BARRINGTON: Claire Barrington, Barrington's Funerals. We are in an old house, so we have -- we are quite split up where we are. We have our offices upstairs and family area downstairs. We have a buzz-in policy so no one can get in the building at all without being let in on the camera. The camera and the screen in the office is visible for all the staff to see who's coming in, have you got an appointment or expecting anybody, very similar to Natalya. Obviously Chapel appointments are all logged, who they are and what time. Families know there's a camera system, so nobody's unaware that they're going to be filmed. We don't have a camera in the mortuary, but we have keypads on all the doors to make it inaccessible. And we just log and make sure we are fully aware of who's -- running around. They shouldn't be -- they can't get to anywhere, they can't, they shouldn't be. It's a completely different area. There are no accessible doors through the hall to our Chapel areas. So, we think it's as locked down as it can be, but we don't have cameras in the mortuary.

TIM SUTER: That is really what I was going to ask, and this is a challenge to you all. Is that enough? Is there more that you could do that you don't do because of cost? Is there other technology available? Can you track the deceased in some way to see if they're moving through? I think some people have mentioned that they have an electronic way of following where the deceased go. But should you all be using key fobs on doors?

So, I would like to just challenge you all to see are there are things that you're not doing that you perhaps think, "We would do that in an ideal environment"? Yes?

CLIVE PEARSON: Clive Pearson. So, we're just a little family firm. So, there's only like a few of us there. So, it's got to be either me or one of my other two colleagues. So, I don't feel that we need, like, key tags. Whereas a bigger firm where you've got lots of staff then it's more appropriate for them, I would say.

TIM SUTER: Okay. The gentleman at the end.

DAVID BARRINGTON: David Barrington. Yes, I think there is more we could do. Where our chapels are, the chapel doors aren't locked. If a family are in there, we might leave them to go and make them a drink, make them refreshments. They could very easily just open another door. So yes, we could do that, definitely.

TIM SUTER: Okay. Yes?

CARRIE WEEKES: Carrie Weekes, A Natural Undertaking. We're only small. We've got single premises. We've got a locked cold room. So, whenever somebody's on the premises who has the ability to sort of wander, they're not going to have -- only keyholders have ever got access to where the people who have died are kept. However, I'm just concerned about the way that we work is to encourage families as closely as possible to be involved in looking after their own dead. To come in, to wash, to dress, to spend time, to

encourage others to come in, to almost -- so sometimes we open up our premises to enable almost a sort of wake situation or a vigil situation to happen.

And in those instances, I don't want there to be cameras. I don't want them to feel they're being watched. And I don't want them to feel like we're kind of providing any kind of barrier really. So, we work sensitively. We've got CCTV on the outside and in the family spaces. But not in the viewing room and not in the mortuary.

TIM SUTER: So, you are content to strike a balance.

CARRIE WEEKES: I think it's really important that any response is proportionate and sensible. Because I don't know how I'd manage with all of those things.

TIM SUTER: Understood.

SARAH JONES: Yeah, I think I want to echo. I don't have half of this, and you'd have to persuade me quite hard that I need it. Because what we're trying to do is say that Funeralcare is part of the community. We want it to be approachable. We want people to not feel frightened to enter a funeral service.

So, we would have our doors -- we would be open, we have a bell. So, someone would go down. The mortuary is locked so nobody can get into the mortuary. We've got a list of people who are allowed into the mortuary- named individuals, if anyone else was in there.

If there is somebody who comes in, they would generally have someone with them because they're in a funeral service and that's scary.

But if there's an electrician who is changing a light bulb in our arranging room, the mortuary is locked. We wouldn't stand next to the electrician. We would -- you can't get into the mortuary. And the rest of its meeting space. These are rooms like -- they look different.

TIM SUTER:

There's a challenge. How do you trust the trusted? How do you ensure that you are making sure that you are a small firm and you have worked with people for many years, is that enough? Do you take people on trust, or should you have policies? Should you have the technology to make sure however long they have been with you, however well you know them, those policies still apply to everyone? Is that too much or is that --?

SARAH JONES:

Well, I think the first thing that you need is policies. And I think we've gone straight to monitoring.

We are in an industry, as you've articulated, where nobody has said what "good" looks like. There is no generally accepted "good" for first offices or any part of care after death. Nobody agrees. Some people agree but there are many versions of what "good" is.

Then you have, I guess -- yes, I completely agree we need to have some kind of policy on how your organisation is going to execute the delivery of good. And then you need some kind of means of monitoring whether your policy is being adhered to. And I think we've skipped a lot of stages straight into CCTV monitoring of whether your policy is being adhered to I would challenge first. But we need to

have good policy. We need to agree what "good" is and then an organisation needs to decide how they are going to self-monitor whether good is happening. And I guess I am going to put out that at the moment I worry it is quite hard, and I am happy that my mechanisms to check that our pretty, like, thorough policies on what "good" looks like for Care After Death, I don't think CCTV would enhance that or standing over an electrician.

TIM SUTER: There's a reason we jumped over the policies, because we are going to come back to them in the final session, Looking Forwards. And actually, I think that starts to come into the question of regulation, trade associations, all of those sorts of things. But you're right to flag that. I saw you were nodding. Did you want to contribute?

PAUL HILTON: No, I agree. Paul Hilton from Paul Hilton Funeral Services. I'm only small. My mortuary is totally separate from my funeral home. It's a separate building, alarmed, fridges are all been fitted with electronic locks that can only be opened by the employees that work there. What you've just said a minute ago is one of the -- trusting colleagues. People I've worked with I've worked with for 25 years. We are former Co-op colleagues. We're all sort of -- back in the day then we were all sort of checked and trained by the Co-op then. So being just three of us it's difficult to have, similar to yourself, similar to have these the checks. The main check we've got is that we employed the people that I work with because I trust them, and I've known them a long time. And we've worked together for 20-odd years in different settings.

So yeah, so that's what -- but ultimately the embalmer that comes in to embalm our deceased, do I know their background? I mean they're a BIE member which is crucial.

TIM SUTER: And what is that? Just so we know.

SARAH JONES: The British Institute of Embalmers.

PAUL HILTON: The Embalming Association. So, they've all registered and they've all got their numbers and everything. So, we try to follow that system but there are some embalming -- where businesses that employ a few embalmers.

So obviously their employees should be checking their background. For us to check their background is quite difficult because we're using the same people we've used historically, which is probably what most people do. And that's their way of ensuring that the people that they're using are trustworthy. There will always be the one that gets through the net.

TIM SUTER: That's very helpful.

PAUL HILTON: And how do you find that? How do you spot that?

TIM SUTER: So, I want to move on to staff and training and education.

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: Before we move on can I just get a -- I get a feeling that there is a sort of difference in you between, as it were, the security of the mortuary or where the deceased, sorry, the people that have died,

are stored. I don't like the word "stored" but where they're kept while waiting for burial and so on.

There is a difference between that and as with the open areas where families may come and other people. Is that right? Is it reasonable to have different forms of security and monitoring in the areas where the people that have died are kept routinely and when they are not being observed?

Obviously once they are out and being treated for whatever they are going to be observed.

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: Nigel Lymn-Rose. I think one of the difficulties is understanding how the funeral industry in general works. And I'm not wearing my own hat here, but we know that something like 35 per cent, 40 per cent of the funeral industry is dealt with by Funeral Directors that have a central office and have hubs.

And those individual offices within the community, if there's a death in the community the person who has died is moved into that environment, being mum or dad or whoever, and is left there until such time as the paperwork is complete.

Most of those offices are operated on a one-person basis because if you pay the bigger -- very often it's a job share to keep that office open. And so, there's only any one time one person in those premises all the time when there are a number of bodies on the premises.

And in our own case, in my hat, it becomes a stage further because we serve a lot of communities that want to visit 24/7. And we give them access the same as you give access to a hotel. They get a bleeper to our gate, and they come in.

They have a key to the Chapel, which is a Chapel that's isolated from the rest of our building, and we give them the key to somewhere where they can make a cup of tea, a cup of coffee. And we've got toilet facilities and a shower facility because of the particular communities we're dealing with.

We don't monitor them. We take it that it's no different to if we've taken a mum and a dad home. And they're allowing access for everyone else, but instead of doing it at home they are doing it on our premises and have access to our car parks.

They don't have access to the rest of our premises, just that one. And I think we would be intruding upon them by interfering in that in any way. Because we wouldn't interfere if it was a delivery home the night before the funeral or the day before or several days before. We offer that facility. It's not the majority of what we do, but it's something we offer.

TIM SUTER: So, can we just develop that in terms of understanding the training that you all give to your own staff to help them understand how to ensure the dignity and the security? So, there are two watchwords that we are always coming back to. So, the dignity and security of a person who has died. Thank you for the terminology.

So, if anyone wants to go first. And I am very conscious that you have alluded to people of different faiths, perhaps, as well in that --

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: Absolutely.

TIM SUTER: And whether that needs different training for staff as well. But if anyone wants to just tell us about the training that they give to their staff first. Does anyone want to go?

NATAYLA MCLACKLAND: Natalya McLackland, Regent Funeral Services. I think everybody is right in what they say. It just depends on the community that you're in, where you work and what is it that you're hoping to do and what your premises is like.

For example, you know, training for us, training comes from me who I've trained down because I do NAFD courses, and I get certificates and diplomas. The Royal College of Pathologists have training for them as well. So, it's about passing that on. But also noting it down and following the guidelines of people such as the NAFD who have a Code, and this is what they expect.

But it also comes from experience and learning from other people. I might want something done a certain way but someone's not going to learn that exact particular way, so you've got to work with that person. But I think the important thing with training, it's not just training it's about journals, retest and reflect what's going on and experience that you give.

For example, we don't -- we have a lot of cultures that come to us because we have Islam, they've got their own place. Jewish community have their own. So, I don't always deal with all those faiths. So, if something comes to me, I'll be honest, sometimes I go, "Oh right. So, who can I ring? Who's done this? And can I speak with that person?" Have you got experience and what do you recommend because everybody's learning is different. Every community is a little bit different.

So, I think that's where it comes from us. But if you can continue developing that. We are under the scope of the Council so we have learning hubs which have safeguarding courses that people can take. But again, if you want to go on the other side of it people don't have the money to take courses. The NAFD courses, they won't fund me, so I have to do it for myself and that's difficult as well because of the world that we live in.

So, I think there's a whole range of things that you could think about.

KATHRYN WHITEHILL: Kathryn Whitehill, Head of Investigations to the Inquiry. You mentioned safeguarding courses there.

NATAYLA MCLACKLAND: Yes.

KATHRYN WHITEHILL: What sort of safeguarding courses? What do they involve?

NATAYLA MCLACKLAND: So, the safeguarding course that I've been on it was there was a Teams course and there was also one online so you could go and see everybody -- sorry, in person.

So, what it was, it was just safeguarding generally. What is it likely to begin with? What is the risk assessment? What does that person need or what do you need? What is the areas that you are in?" So, it's just kind of how do you safeguard yourself, other people and the company? What's the best practice? What's the policies? What's the risk assessment? Control measures. Procedures.

It's a lot to take in. I work for an organisation so when my electrician comes, I don't know who it's going to be. David Fuller was an electrician and look what happened there. So, you know, it's just

making sure that these people -- you are the best person you can be.

You can pass on that best knowledge.

There's loads of courses out there but for us that safeguarding course was brought down by the Gateshead Council so through the government so that's how that came to us.

JANE CAMPBELL: Can I just come in, sorry?

TIM SUTER: Yes.

JANE CAMPBELL: Jane Campbell. If you have a new starter, do they train on the job or do they have to do a certain amount of training before you let them start to work?

NATAYLA MCLACKLAND: Natalya McLackland. So, what happens is we have a training guide, so kind of like an induction and then we take them through each area. Now for me I have a team of 15 but a lot of them are casual staff. So, I know that I have to do specific training over a period of time. So, I wouldn't expect somebody to learn something as quick as someone who was a full time with us.

So, they would get a lot of supervision. They would get a continuous professional development. They would get signed off plans to make sure that they could do something at the level that the company expects, following the guidelines of, for example, for us is the NAFD.

TIM SUTER: I will just bring in this gentleman.

ROSS HICKTON: Yeah, Ross Hickton. Similar to what my colleague down the end mentioned about new starters.

So, we DBS check all our new staff, make sure they've got a clean criminal record. They are all on six-month probationary periods. We have a company handbook which is about 100 pages thick which is constantly being updated, with practices and procedures, how the company operates.

We have -- we like all of our staff to be able to do every element of the business, back of house that is, so that's preparing the deceased, preparing the coffins, driving, bearing, being part of the funeral team on the day. So, we do cram as much as we can in their first few months of being with the company to ensure they understand every element. And depending which department they're working in they are continually monitored, buddied up with an experienced member of staff.

Luckily, we've got staff who have been with us over 10, 15 years. Trusted members of staff who can report to us if there's any concerns or issues.

Equally we took on two new roles within our business a few months ago where staff can go to another member of staff who aren't a director or a manager, they're a welfare officer, got any reports, concerns. They can go to these two people in confidence and raise any concerns which can then be brought to the directors, family essentially, our business, to investigate.

TIM SUTER: Thank you. And just to wrap those things together, how many of you have a DBS check for current staff?

SARAH JONES: Can only get a standard, you can't get an enhanced.

TIM SUTER: So, a standard DBS check. So, we have got four.

NATALYA MCLACKLAND: Enhanced.

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: Nigel Lymn-Rose. Can I just say? We tried to CRB all our staff and we were advised we could not. That was the problem we got--

TIM SUTER: And by whom? Who advised you that? Just so it's clear.

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: The legal advisors with the NAFD.

TIM SUTER: Okay. How many of you think that DBS checking is a helpful thing for you to be doing? That is most but not all of you, okay, for those who are more hesitant, if I could ask you why? What is the concern about DBS?

PAUL HILTON: I've not really got a concern I think because it's not something that's mandatory. If it was mandatory, I think then everybody would then sit up and listen.

I'm not - sometimes you can do a DBS check, which has happened in my previous position, and still the role -- the right person that is within the mix, the bad apples there, have been DBS checked as well. So, it's trying to find something that will -- I don't think you'll ever find it. But I think trying to find something that would, you know, eliminate that bad apple, if I can put it like that, rather than --

I mean as I say, I don't think it's a bad thing. It's not something I would necessarily -- because only there's three other - you know, the situation is, we've always been there for - for since we started and all of that. But, like I say, I think people -- somebody who's coming in new that didn't know, I think then I'd have to --

TIM SUTER: So, on that how many of you -- I am conscious, but I'll come back to you, how many of you do DBS checks for new people? Okay, so five of you.

If I just go to Natalya, if you would just like to? You were hesitant about DBS checks so that's why I am coming to you.

NATAYLA MCLACKLAND: I think I would like to share something with you. It is really extreme, and I have never come across it before, but I think it is really important.

So, we do DBS check, and we do that through the Council through our HR. But we actually went to interview a gentleman, absolutely lovely he was. He had a tale to tell and a really awful life, he did, bless him.

But he was honest, and he cites there, "Oh, I've got a conviction". I say, "All right, great, thank you very much". So, we helped people who've had that. "But I've been convicted of murder". And I said, "Right okay". Very open about it and he's on the internet and he's done what -- but what was important is that, and I, to be honest, I don't know why I asked him. I said, "So what would happen if I DBS checked you?" And he says, "Oh well, nothing. Because I was convicted of murder under another name in another country".

So that wouldn't have even -- had he not have been honest and I'd actually taken him on I would never have known that he'd had that. So, I think while DBS is important there's something missing and, like, you know, just what everyone else is saying, it's just not enough. There has to be something else.

TIM SUTER: Okay. We are going to start to wrap this up. But we have got a question here and the question here.

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: Nigel Lymn-Rose. It's a point of clarification. You mentioned in the introduction about the FCA. The FCA has become an AR.

TIM SUTER: What is an AR?

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: An Authorised Representative of a pre-paid planning company. You have to be DBS checked and that is -- well we can say, in fact in the last year 39 of our staff have been DBS checked. But that is not for our capacity as a Funeral Director because we don't have to the right to do that. But that is in the capacity of selling pre-paid funeral plans. Just to give you a --

TIM SUTER: Thank you, that's really helpful. Yes.

CARRIE WEEKES: Carrie Weekes, A Natural Undertaking. Would a DBS check or a CRB check have prevented any of David Fuller's crimes?

TIM SUTER: I don't think we're going to answer that question because we are here to gather evidence. It is fair challenge, but I do not think we are here to answer questions back in a sense. Yes?

DAVID COULSON: David Coulson, Regent Funeral Services. I think one of the problems with the DBS check is the fact it only proves that you haven't been caught for something yet, so...

TIM SUTER: So next question. How many of you have a whistleblowing policy? So that is six of you. Okay. Those who did not put your hands up, why don't you have a whistleblowing policy? Is it just because you haven't had time to do it? Is there another reason that that is something that you have not got in place? I don't know if anyone wants to ...?

DEBORAH TORRIE: Deborah Torrie from Deborah Ingham. We're just a small family. There's me, my husband and two daughters. So, it wouldn't work in that case.

TIM SUTER: Okay, that is really helpful, thank you. Yes.

CARRIE WEEKES: Carrie Weekes, A Natural Undertaking. And we're a little bit similar in that we're just -- so we are working to put policies in place. So, it's not through lack of wanting one. It's just the pace of growth in this case.

TIM SUTER: Okay, is there anyone else? Yes?

SARAH JONES: Sarah Jones, Full Circle Funerals. I think the challenge is again that people have all kind of means to write their own. That's the state of play which is quite tricky, and some people might be very motivated to do this but it's just not something they have. I was fortunate, I have one of these things from a previous life so you just tailor it. But not everybody, I guess, who runs a business has all of that.

TIM SUTER: Okay.

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: Can I just, before we move on, Tim? Can I just check, we have obviously got a range of different sized companies represented here. I am particularly interested in the very small family base, Deborah, sort of -- would it be feasible, would it be practical for you to develop some of the things that the larger companies have in place in terms of procedures, policies, equipment and monitoring etc? Or would that actually just make you non-viable as organisations?

PAUL HILTON: Paul Hilton, Paul Hilton Funeral Services. That's the basis I set my business up on, on the previous large company that I worked for, using their policies, their procedures, their mortuary register, their passport, their tracking documents. So similar to yourself, you had some stuff before that you've brought on, you've changed, and you've modified them to --
But I'm working between- one little premises and not moving people from, like, a satellite to a satellite branch, whilst they're being prepared and stuff like that. But to answer your question, yes. I think the policies, the procedures that some of the big companies use, the Co-ops and the Dignities of this world, which I was privy to, I have

actually implemented those, to the best and to the most workable way you can with just a couple of people working there.

So, we do -- it is something that you can -- where you can use if you've got that previous background or if you've got access to those policies or procedures.

I mean the lady mentioned before about when you employ new staff, having manuals and things like that, and I think it works with a bigger company. But when there's only a couple of us, family, mine's family, and you think there's a lot of it that doesn't seem relevant. I'm not saying it isn't. It doesn't seem because we're so small, and you're just, like, working together every single day. It doesn't seem as though all these policies that a big company would put in place to ensure the credibility of the company going forward. Although that's what we want as well, being small. But some of them are a bit too much.

TIM SUTER: Yes?

DAVID WRIGHT: David Wright. I agree with your points there. As a small company there's lots and lots of things to do for a limited number of people. So, we employ an HR company, and these policies are something we're looking at. But to get everything in place in whatever time order you want it is just a challenge really, when you've got a business to run. People calling you up, somebody's passed away. Those things take precedence to putting policies in place.

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: I suppose all I am getting is whether or not it threatens the viability of your small company by having too many requirements placed on you.

DAVID WRIGHT: I think it can do. As I say, you want to do all these policies and get everything in place. But when they are only small, just two or three people employed, some things are less important to do immediately than others.

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: And Deborah?

DEBORAH TORRIE: I totally agree. If I started -- employed anybody from outside, then they would have policies in place. But at the moment, the four of us, we've all got our own individual jobs. We all know what we're doing. We just work together. And I mean we're DBS checked because we do sell the plans. So, we're all --

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: You are all DBS checked.

DEBORAH TORRIE: Well, me and my eldest daughter are DBS checked because we sell the plans.

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: Because of the financial requirement rather than any other requirement. Thanks.

TIM SUTER: Yes.

CARRIE WEEKES: Carrie Weekes, A Natural Undertaking. My concern is that I set up my company about 10 years ago, not coming from the funeral business because I didn't like the big company business model. And I felt like the level of care that was provided by that kind of structure wasn't fulfilling a particular need in my community. But I would have found it incredibly difficult to start. If wasn't able to start up and be fleet of foot and to be able to --

If I'd have had to come up with the investment straightaway, the kind of CCTV systems and all of those things, I wouldn't be doing this job now. And actually, I think that a bit of innovation and challenge to the business is a good thing for any industry. So, I wouldn't want that to be too much of a barrier to start up, essentially.

TIM SUTER: We have overrun. There was one other topic that we haven't covered that I just wanted to ask perhaps one or two questions, but we need to be quick, which is offsite storage.

And I don't know whether any of you do use storage for a person who has died that is not within your own premises and whether you have service level agreements for that. If you do, how do you ensure the security and dignity of the deceased?

I am saying all of that knowing that is an enormous topic, so it is perhaps something we can pick up with you separately if you have views. But it would be helpful to have a show of hands. And I don't know whether me referring to offsite storage is the correct term, whether there is a different way you refer to it. But let's use that and you can correct me if I have got it wrong.

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: But the key thing is actually that it is not under your organisation's auspices. So effectively it's a subcontract of some form.

TIM SUTER: Can you just have a show of hands, if any of you use offsite storage. So just one. Okay.

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: Nigel Lymn-Rose. I need to add a rider for that I'm afraid because it goes back to what I was talking about. Serving communities whereby they have access and so on.

We serve communities throughout the country, the travelling community. So, if we get a death in Southampton and the family do not want the dad/mum whoever to be moved from Southampton, we go door knocking in Southampton to find a firm that will allow us to move the person into their premises, for them to do the first offices and indeed the embalming. And we probably even use their Chapel of Rest. We provide the casket. We then move and deal with the rest -- deal with the funeral.

But there would be no service level agreement because it's a one-off isolated incident that arises. "Today I need to find someone that can provide that service".

Now around this table the answer I'll give might not be particularly well-liked but our initial call, even though I'm a private firm, is to look for Dignity or the Co-op or Funeral Parlours, because I believe they have a standard in place that I can rely on. It might not be as high as some of the private firms' standards. But equally I know it will not fall below a particular barrier. So that gives me a level of comfort.

TIM SUTER: Thank you. Does anyone else want to come in? Do you want to come in?

DAVID BARRINGTON: David Barrington. Yeah, I agree with Nigel too. So sometimes you may use a different Funeral Directors to look after somebody because it is more convenient for family.

The only other time that we have a person resting somewhere that isn't under our control is when the body goes home. So, when families take them home to their own houses obviously at that point, we have no control over who has access to them.

TIM SUTER: Okay. Thank you.

DEBORAH TORRIE: I've also used -- obviously, you know, if people from away and they want to use me, but I always make sure they're safe, registered, qualified and everything. I would never just ring around funeral directors in that area and say, "Can you look after this body?" It's always got to be under some regulation. But I have done it two or three times.

TIM SUTER: Yes?

ROSS HICKTON: Ross Hickton. I think quickly off the back of what we just discussed as well, there are occasions where the deceased is kept at an airport. So, the Repatriation Board, we go and deliver the coffin on the morning the flight is not till the following morning, or the evening. The deceased has left our care, is entrusted into the airport, cargo

terminal, essentially. Still under our jurisdiction until that plane's took off with the airports got control.

And even in reverse when the deceased comes in from a flight, they may be a hold up in the operation, in getting paperwork clearance.

So that coffin may end up being sat in the cargo for a number of days. Out of our control completely.

TIM SUTER: Okay, that is very interesting. Does anyone else want to contribute to that?

SARAH JONES: Just one quick point that it also works the other way round. And so, I've been asked whether we would be willing to give access to our temperature control unit to other funeral directors. And because they haven't been able to provide me with a document on how they would look to then look after that person, I haven't given them access to my facilities.

So, I guess the question goes both ways. If you're letting someone else use your facilities yet in theory, you're not really responsible for their care. But the question goes both ways.

TIM SUTER: Yes, last contribution.

DAVID BARRINGTON: David Barrington. Similar to Ross we repatriate quite a lot of people to the Isle of Man. We got them off on the ferry and they're alone on the ferry and then at the other end a funeral director will collect them.

TIM SUTER: Okay, thank you. I think unless anyone has any further contributions that is the end of session one in terms of What Happens Now.

We have got a lot of ground -- we haven't covered every bit of ground, far from it, but it is very helpful.

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: Nigel Lymn-Rose. But there are 30,000 or so deaths that are not covered which are the deaths which are now going to Pure Cremation whereby they are using a myriad of funeral directors, completely uncontrolled throughout the country, to move --

TIM SUTER: We are talking about dignity and security of the deceased. We are not an Inquiry into the funeral --

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: I'm sorry, what I'm saying is Pure Cremation get nothing wrong if there's death in Nottingham, they'll not come to Nottingham to move that person from where they've died. They contact anybody else to move --

TIM SUTER: Okay, perhaps that's something we can pick up and have a think about.

REBECCA CHALONER: That feels like something totally separate. I know it's linked, but totally separate.

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: I'm not saying they're doing anything wrong. I am just saying they are using the facilities of another funeral director, of the deceased...

TIM SUTER: I am conscious of the time. Would anyone like a five-minute break just to stretch legs? And there seems to be a few nods.

(Brief adjournment)

TIM SUTER: So, if we start session two which is Who is Checking Up? So that is looking at what external oversight is in place and whether it is adequate.

So really want to start with Inspections by trade associations. So, as we understand it you are all members of either one or sometimes, I think for some of you, two trade associations.

I think the first question is how often are your premises inspected by trade associations?

I think SAIF, their Code of Practice or their material suggests perhaps only once every four years. Whereas NAFD is perhaps more regular, but I would like you to tell us your understanding of the inspection regime. Yes.

PAUL HILTON: Paul Hilton, Paul Hilton Funeral Services. So yeah, we've recently been inspected by SAIF. And they obviously came round, checked the premises, checked all the security, everything on their remit to check and advised us on things that we a) have to do, b) should do. And possibly going in the future, if things change, recommendations for the future which I find really good. I find really good because sometimes you can get complacent and think, "I'm doing everything I should do". And I think it's easier when it's a small situation like us. I suppose if you're in a big concern then obviously the monitoring is more important. But from my point of view when SAIF came round, they checked all of the policies, the procedures and they issued us with a certificate to say that we passed.

They did ask us to fit some fans in the mortuary, which we did. Took pictures of them, sent them off and they okayed everything. So, it's definitely a good idea. Whether it's every year, two years, four years, not bothered.

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: Can I just check? Do they require you to send evidence that you have done the things that they --?

PAUL HILTON: Yes, exactly. So, they will give you a recommendation or something that they think you should be implementing. And then they won't necessarily come back and physically have a look at it, but they want evidence that you have done it. And when they come probably next time, they will ...

But going back to the frequency of a visit. I think probably the frequency is down to them based on the number of staff they've got that are qualified to do these visits.

But to me, if they came every year it'd be fine I could -- I think it stops you from getting complacent really. That's all.

TIM SUTER: So, picking that up. Frequency of Inspections. Does anyone have a view?

NATAYLA MCLACKLAND: Natalya McLackland, Regent Funeral Services. I completely agree with you. My disappointment is that we are just one building and we are classed as "Independent", But we are under the umbrella of a large organisation which is the Council, it's the first of its kind that's ever been done. So, SAIF won't take us on, but the NAFD will.

My background that I come from in hospital settings, I get regulated, and Inspectors meet frequently. And the reason now -- we have now been open five and a half year. I've only been inspected once and that's when we opened. And I want to be inspected. I want people to come --

TIM SUTER: I am sorry, that is NAFD?

NATAYLA MCLACKLAND: The NAFD, yeah. And I want people to come and just show up and let me show them and go oh you know, maybe you do with a better practice here, maybe you could put this in because I want to be the best or in high quality or high dignity. And I can only do what I feel that's true by looking at the Code, so I think inspection should be more frequent.

TIM SUTER: At the end.

DAVID BARRINGTON: David Barrington. So, I am a member of the Committee for Professional Standards for the NAFD. We used to be responsible for the NAFD inspectors or the quality managers, as they're called. They have now transferred over to IFSO. When they were NAFD the aim was for inspections being carried out within two years. They were unannounced. The inspectors would just turn up, if they were able to. They wouldn't hinder the operation of a business, but they would like to be given access when they turn up.

Now obviously COVID has got in the way of that. So, inspections were suspended during COVID, then they handed over to IFSO. Now IFSO have taken a much more risk-based approach.

So, they now no longer give a fixed timescale of inspections so that you will be inspected within a certain amount of time because they're looking at risks, they're looking at previous inspections and they're feeding all of that intelligence into whether they inspect or not. And they take a much wider view. They look at websites as well as physically attending the premises as well.

I have to say I agree with Nat (Natalya). I'm at the point, from a business point of view, I'm at the point where I'm a bit disappointed because I'm starting to get itchy that I want to be inspected.

And we are SAIF members as well. We have had SAIF inspection within their timeframe. But currently I'm sort of wanting IFSO to now inspect. --

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: David, can I just check? From your understanding what are the criteria they are using to make their risk assessment?

DAVID BARRINGTON: So, they inspect compliance to the Funeral Director Code. So that is what they're --

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: No. No, What I am after is --

DAVID BARRINGTON: The risk base --?

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: The risk base, yes. So, what are the criteria of risks that they are -- what are they --?

DAVID BARRINGTON: So, we don't really know.

SARAH JONES: They don't know.

DAVID BARRINGTON: Because IFSO have taken over that remit they now don't report back into my committee, the committee that I'm a member of.

We did actually at our last meeting have some input from the head inspector of IFSO. But unfortunately, what we hoped by creating IFSO would be that a Joint Code of Practice between the two main trade bodies unfortunately didn't happen. Even though the SAIF did contribute to review the --

TIM SUTER: We will come on to case practice. So, I would just like to understand what does an inspection involve? I know some of you might not have been through an inspection recently. But perhaps if you want to go first.

CLIVE PEARSON: Clive Pearson. So, they come. So, they check all your paperwork and make sure all your paperwork is in order, make sure you're doing estimates, and all your pricelists are all in order.

TIM SUTER: Okay, so paperwork being for price plans.

CLIVE PEARSON: Yeah, and so contracts are countersigned and all that. So, all that's got to be in order. They come to look at where you're storing your ashes, because obviously after the funeral you get the ashes, is that a good place where you're storing them? Because you've still got to show respect for the ashes as well.

They look in the mortuary and they'll make sure it's compliant. So, like, the fans, putting in new fans to change the air. They'll look through that. They'll look at all your fridges and say, "Can I look inside?" Make sure the bodies are all properly covered, make sure they've got headblocks and are being looked after as they should be. So, they look around everything.

TIM SUTER: Okay. Is there a difference between a SAIF inspection and an NAFD inspection? Are they the same?

CLIVE PEARSON: They are very similar, very similar.

REBECCA CHALONER: Rebecca Chaloner. Could I just interject there, Tim? As part of those inspections by SAIF or NAFD do they look at all of your security measures or staff training, any of those aspects at all?

CLIVE PEARSON: Clive Pearson. They've not looked at security measures.

TIM SUTER: Do they look at the dignity? How you maintain dignity of the deceased? Natalya's nodding, I can see. And others? And how do they do that?

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: Nigel Lymn-Rose. Verbally they interview you. They have been around the premises. And so, I mean it's a snapshot. In our own premises we try to ensure a director, a company director, visits every one of our offices, within a month. And we keep a record of that and have a general look round.

We have an internal auditor that we pay, and every premises is visited, and quality inspected by the internal audit seeing the things that need -- that be covering all paperwork, covering procedures, covering pretty much everything, every quarter. So that's our internal check.

And then we've got an NAFD, now IFSO.

TIM SUTER: Yes?

SARAH JONES: Sarah Jones, Full Circle. I've been inspected by both and my challenge after both was, you've articulated a standard but there seems to be significant variance between what evidence the inspector will take as adherence to that standard.

So as far as I'm aware, having asked the direct question to both, they don't currently have a clear, I guess, list of evidence that would show adherence to a standard. So, it's a little bit more freeform than they're actually being --

I've had lots of experience of CQC inspections, and it does not feel the same.

TIM SUTER: Natalya?

NATAYLA MCLACKLAND: Natayla McLackland. I just wanted to kind of add, I don't know if anybody else has ever had this, but we've actually had a HTA inspection for something that we wanted to do. And I find that the HTA are very clear with what needs to be done, which is what comes in hospitals and satellite and obviously getting their licensing. And where we -- so I would like to see something very similar from the

NAFD or SAIF where they say, "You know what, actually you need to make this room bigger", so unfortunately that could be a cost to the premises. "Is it quite where it needs to be? You need to move that". And I think that -- I like that style personally. I think that's quite clear and was good for us to take different measures on.

TIM SUTER: So that picks up on what is the outcome of the inspections that you have? Is anything published? I don't think there is but is there any way for a family to go and check, "Actually I want to use this particular funeral directors". This is how they have been given their equivalent to a Trust Pilot score, anything like that. That's what you -- you put your hand up.

CARRIE WEEKES: Carrie Weekes, A Natural Undertaking. We have been SAIF members for quite a long time and when we opened our premises, we had an inspection, but we haven't had one for about five years now. But as a matter of course we regularly ask families if they would like to know where their mum is going to be. We introduce them to the people who will be looking after the person who has died. We invite them in to look at our mortuary space. Not the fridge space that's ... And we cover all the names up and we do everything in a way, "This is the space where if you want to come and spend some time with your mum this is the room that you will be in, this is how we will work this".

And because we do that I kind of want to challenge them to go and do that with other funeral directors, so they feel they're making a good decision. And that is something that lots of families, I don't think they know what we do really. And sometimes it really helps get rid of that

mystery around the work that we do. And lots of people take us up on that and they really appreciate that.

TIM SUTER: Okay. Yes?

PAUL HILTON: Paul Hilton, Paul Hilton Funeral Services. Just a quick one. So recently I did a funeral and in all the time I've been in the funeral business, the only time I've been asked am I a member of the NAFD or am I a member of SAIF was from the family. And at first, I was a bit, "Oh", but on reflection I thought, "That was a great question, and everybody should ask that".

TIM SUTER: Why?

PAUL HILTON: Because if you're a member of SAIF or the NAFD and you're having the checks and the regular, they're coming to view your premises and following up on all the recommendations you've done. You'll be registered with SAIF. They could go on to the SAIF website, they could put my postcode in. My name will come up, Paul Hilton Funeral Services as a SAIF member. And I think then that should give them peace of mind that they're dealing with a funeral director that is a member of the organisation, we're getting regular checks and sort of walking the walk.

TIM SUTER: I know some of your hands up but my challenge back to all of you on that is, is that inspection regime adequate? Or those regimes adequate?

So, you have said, quite understandably, a family would be reassured by the regular inspections. But we have also heard that at least two of you are itching for more inspections. So, there is a tension there. And so, I just want to understand, is that inspection regime or regimes good enough. If it is not, how can it be made good enough?

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: Nigel Lymn-Rose. If I can clarify one thing. We spoke about are the results of the --

TIM SUTER: Yes but answer the questions. That is what we need rather than clarifications.

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: But it's not graded, that's the point. But if you fail you have to either put it right or you get disciplined, and that discipline can involve being moved out from membership of the trade organisation.

TIM SUTER: Okay, so that is the sanction. You lose --

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: But unlike CQC type inspections or Ofsted, it is not graded.

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: Not graded, no.

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: So, knowing that you are SAIF registered or SAIF inspected does not tell you anything about the outcome.

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: Not given one star, two star, three stars...

TIM SUTER: Okay. Yes.

ROSS HICKTON: Ross Hickton, if I can just put another hat on. I sit on the SAIF National Deputy Committee. We are doing a lot of work at the moment regarding inspections, quality assurance as we call it. We have just been awarded ISO9000 and something, I'll have to confirm.

TIM SUTER: I have actually written down what it is.

ROSS HICKTON: So, our members should see a difference in inspections soon. They will be more frequent, and they will be more in-depth. And as Nigel next to me said, if you don't meet the criteria of the inspection, you have a chance to put it right. And if you don't put it right you are excluded from membership.

We are also putting together a helpful pack of how we feel a back of house funeral home should look. So, suggestions of mortuary, how it should look, the space it should have, the size you should have as well as a list of suppliers and indicative costs of what it would cost to get to the standards we'd like to see.

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: Can I just be clear? If you are excluded from membership, can you come back in once you have sorted it out?

ROSS HICKTON: Ross Hickton. You would have to re-apply and do the whole membership application again from start to finish.

TIM SUTER: At the end.

DAVID BARRINGTON: David Barrington. So just going back to the publishing of Inspection Reports.

The NAFD did have a goal to get to, to where inspections were published. Again, that has now been handed over to IFSO and we don't know what their intentions are. But yeah, ideally the inspection reports would be published.

And actually, in lots of ways that would also give the consumers some confidence because they'd also be able to see what you've done to address the issues of inspection.

TIM SUTER: Yes. Yes, go ahead.

SARAH JONES: Sarah Jones, Full Circle. I think the challenge is the fact that it's a trade association who is leading this anyway because they ultimately exist by membership paying their fees.

It's challenging for them to decide what good is because they are not independently able to do that. They are there for their members, so there's a natural tension then between what they might like to do, what they think good is, what some of their members think versus other members.

So, it's kind of a bit flawed from the start because you don't have a good set of standards. And then the consequence of not being a member is just that you're not a member, as we have heard. It's not going to affect your business realistically from a customer --

TIM SUTER: I will come back to that particular point. Anyone else? Natalya?

NATAYLA MCLACKLAND: Natayla McLackland from Regent. I just wanted to add again about the inspection reports and everything.

Again, CQC and HTA each year publish their report on mortuaries, and they do that and that's really thorough it says what the failings are, what they need to change, the timescales.

And for me personally I would welcome that because I think it's really important because I think we're going across the board when we talk about honesty and transparency. So, if we're going to hit these marks, we have to give a little bit more of ourselves to people to actually --

TIM SUTER: Okay. Sorry, Jane.

JANE CAMPBELL: Is there anything to stop you publishing your own inspection report on your website?

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: Nigel Lymn-Rose. You can publish the IFSO Inspection Report because you are given a certificate that you have been inspected and that you have passed. So, you could publish that.

TIM SUTER: Sarah, I think I heard you say there is no report.

SARAH JONES: There is no report though, is there. You're not given a report. You're just given a --

DAVID BARRINGTON: You get your certificate, but you don't get the narrative.

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: Oh, you don't get the narrative, yes, because the inspector says...

TIM SUTER: So how do you know what you have to improve? How do you know what --?

DAVID BARRINGTON: You get told what you need to do.

TIM SUTER: But you don't get told what you're doing well?

DAVID BARRINGTON: You don't get the whole narrative, no.

SARAH JONES: Sarah Jones, Full Circle. So, we were given some suggestions about what we should do which I couldn't tie into the Code. So, I said, "These all seem, well, some seem sensible, some less so to me", and I asked which bit of the Code that they related to, and they didn't. So, it was an individual suggestion on behalf of the inspector.

TIM SUTER: So just a final question on trade associations. At the start I said there is 25 per cent as far as we understand that are not a member of either NAFD or SAIF or any other trade association. What happens to them? How are they inspected? You're not the right the audience for this. I completely recognise that.

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: We're not.

DAVID BARRINGTON: Just carry on as normal.

TIM SUTER: Okay, so there's a few of you. So, if I just go to you first.

DAVID WRIGHT: David Wright. As people say they are not inspected but I think the general consensus with the public is that all funeral directors are probably regulated or monitored, which is obviously not the case.

TIM SUTER: And that comes out in the CMA Report. I think there is a clear indication in that that that's what the public think.
But others had their hands up, sorry. Yes?

ROSS HICKTON: Ross Hickton. I mean for the 25 per cent who aren't members of SAIF or the NAFD the only time third party who is within the profession would essentially enter into their mortuary would be if it's a GP or a coroner's contractor or the coroner's agents.
And personally speaking, as a member of the SAIF Executive I have local Coroner's contractors call me up moaning about the state of mortuaries of non-trade body members.
And they ask who can I report this to and what can I do? And the answer is there's nobody because they're not a part of either association so there is no backstop.

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: Nigel Lymn-Rose. It's worse than that though because the coroner award contracts to people who are not members of any trade organisation. They award their contracts simply on – it's not meant to be on the base of cost, it's supposed to be on the base of cost and quality. But actually, we see non-members receiving these contracts sometimes at a ridiculously low price. And it can't provide the services it should provide for what they're charging.

SARAH JONES: There is something called "Good Funeral Guide" who are --

TIM SUTER: I have seen the websites. So just tell us a little bit about that.

SARAH JONES: Yes, so they do inspections for their -- so they have -- you can apply to be a recommended Funeral Director. They have stated what that means for them and then they do inspections. So, I don't know how many of the 35 per cent are members of that but that is a third.

TIM SUTER: And how many of you here are a member of Good Funeral Guide?

SARAH JONES: Yes, so it's a recommended funeral directors--

TIM SUTER: So, five. So perhaps nearly 50 per cent of you. I just wanted to ask about who else has oversight. So, I think we touched on this already a bit, so we can perhaps take this quickly. But Financial Conduct Authority, do you regard them as having any oversight? And if so, is that oversight that is helpful?

So, we have got the FCA, we have got the Health and Safety Executive perhaps. I think Natayla, you have mentioned, Local Authority.

NATAYLA MCLACKLAND: Natayla McLackland. Yes, Local Authority so again they have things like cremations, they have their own crematoriums and stuff like that. Sorry, I think I just missed the question.

TIM SUTER: No, it's all right. I just want to understand who else, independent of the funeral profession, has oversight of you. So FCA, HSE. I would just like you to touch on those things. Yes.

DAVID BARRINGTON: David Barrington. Obviously Trading Standards do because we operate commercially. The Environmental Health sometimes will make inspections of funeral premises too.

TIM SUTER: And what do those inspections -- are they similar?

DAVID BARRINGTON: I've never had an Environmental Health inspection. So, I know that sometimes they go into funeral premises.

DEBORAH TORRIE: Deborah Torrie, Deborah Ingham Funeral Service. A Funeral Director, he had a bit of a beef with me, and he said and he sent a Health and safety inspector and they came, and they said we've never been called to a funeral directors before. And the questions they were asking about, "How do you get the coffin over that lip of the door?" "How do you get out of the fridge if you get locked in?" And you could see them trying to you know, "How do you get the coffin into the hearse?" And they just had no idea what they were talking about.

TIM SUTER: Okay. Does anyone else have experience of other external oversight?

ROSS HICKTON: Ross Hickton. Not me personally but Food Standards. Some funeral homes have their own catering suites and provide meals and food on site. So, they would be under the Food Standards --

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: Nigel Lymn-Rose. We also had, during the Pandemic, we had oversight from the HTA because we registered with the HTA for taking some swabs. And to take those swabs we had to be registered but normally a funeral director wouldn't be able to register with the HTA for that specific purpose. And that finished with the change in the COVID Pandemic.

TIM SUTER: Okay, Education and Training. So, do any of you receive support to provide Education and Training to care for those who have died? So, you are obviously all members of a trade association. I think Sarah has picked up uniformity of standards. Just is there anything more that you would like to see? Or what help do you receive with Education and Training of your staff? David?

DAVID BARRINGTON: David Barrington. So, I tutor for the NAFD. But with my business hat on I just feel that the education has lost its way a bit. And the reason I say that, so I am a registered NAFD tutor. There's about 12 of us. We have a shared set of learning materials that all of the students have, but individually the way we deliver the course is individual to me. So, I deliver it my way and all my colleagues deliver it their own way. And that troubles me. I feel that we should all be delivering to the same set of learning. Lesson plans and all of that. And so, the NAFD, so I'll talk about the NAFD because that's who I'm involved with. So, they have a suite of courses. They have a very low-level Introduction to Funeral Service course which is online. They have some Mortuary and Funeral Service operative courses. So manual handling and they're over a Zoom course. They are one day.

They then have the Certificate of Arranging and Administration. So that's for arrangers, administrators, people who are doing paperwork. Handling Families, so looking after families and up to the point of the funeral. And then they have the Diploma of Funeral Directing which is their sort of top-level course.

So, they have a suite of courses. But again, it sort of troubles me that it could be more modular. So, once you've done a certain amount of modules you could become qualified, and this is just me speaking now.

TIM SUTER: Does any of it cover dignity of those who have died and the security of premises as to where someone is kept?

DAVID BARRINGTON: So, the Funeral Director Code is the sort of golden thread that links all of that together.

TIM SUTER: But in terms of Education and Training do you have modules that are encouraging or setting out basic standards?

DAVID BARRINGTON: Yes, yeah. The Care and Preparation of the Deceased people, the Health and Safety in a Mortuary Setting, all of those are modules. But they're called "modules" pretty much within all of the training.

TIM SUTER: Okay. Natalya.

NATAYLA MCLACKLAND: Natayla McLackland, Regent Funeral Services. I've just done the brand-new Level Four NAFD course. So, it was the first one that they pulled together and that does cover now about premises, about

handling the deceased, identification and what you would expect through the Code.

And it is better than any other course that I've been because obviously the point of the course is to make it better. But there used to be a Mortuary Science course that you could do. And you can do things with the APT team that everyone's kind of starting to join in. But like you said, everybody's completely different.

So, I done a Level Three with the NAFD and at the time I couldn't afford the Four, so the Government said, it was Gateshead Council said, "Oh well do this Level Three, it's cheaper", but the course was basically everything I'd just learnt. But they were saying that it was a higher and it wasn't.

So, it would be nice, I mean I think I've wrote any information you -- I would personally think that the Government needs to find regulation. Education, Regulation, come hand in hand.

Everybody needs to be the same across the board. It needs to be free. It needs to be accessible, and it needs to be something modular. Make it go together to meet people to talk about their experiences and develop that way. Because at the minute everything's just all over the place.

TIM SUTER: Okay. Yes.

CLIVE PEARSON: Clive Pearson. So, I'm a tutor with the British Institute of Funeral Directors. We run a Level Four course which is accredited by Greenwich University.

So, the first course is Complete Funeral Service. That is more the office administrator side of things. Touching a little bit on the

deceased and care of the deceased. And then it's almost everything to do with funerals. Including how the deceased should be looked after when you go into premises now. How the process should be, how the refrigeration --

TIM SUTER: Okay, that's really helpful.

JANE CAMPBELL: Jane Campbell. Just quickly, so even if you are a member of a trade association you still have to pay for training. You don't get that as part of your membership package.

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: Correct.

JANE CAMPBELL: Right, okay.

NATAYLA MCLACKLAND: Natayla McLackland. So, I've got to pay each time. So, we get discount if you're part of an association but otherwise you have to pay and if your company won't then you do. So, if you're passionate like what I am and I want to learn and I want to be educated, it's a big cost and it's not being covered by --

TIM SUTER: I am keen just to move on if we can.

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: Can we just check about SAIF? What about their training?

ROSS HICKTON: Ross Hickton. So, SAIF has an accredited training college with the IFD College, the Independent Funeral Director College.

That college has always done modular learning from cleaning vehicles all the way through to care of deceased. Care of Deceased, Dealing with the Deceased, Arranging Funerals and now Level Four for Funeral Director Diploma. So, we offer a full range of courses similar to the NAFD. And they are constantly being developed.

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: And so, we understand, that is separate from the IFD which is the Institute of Funeral Directors, is that right?

TIM SUTER: If you just let... if you just answer.

ROSS HICKTON: Yes, it is.

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: So, separate from. Thanks.

ROSS HICKTON: Independent Funeral Directors College.

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: Nigel Lymn-Rose. Just to be clear though there is also the British Institute of Embalmers which was mentioned a little earlier. And the majority of people who have got full-time staff in their mortuary are only employing members of the British Institute of Embalmers who are qualified, both paperwork qualified, and they have to undergo practical examination.

And most mortuaries, I would suggest, most active mortuaries doing basic procedures, have got members of the Institute. So individual membership of organisations, the British Institute of Embalmers, BIE and the British Institute of Funeral Directors. And there's trade associations. So IFSO, NAFD...

TIM SUTER: I would just like to move on, is it --?

CLIVE PEARSON: So, I am also an embalming tutor as well. So, we are teaching mortuaries that are up to standard. So, it's the mortuary's got to be up to standard for us to be able to teach in there with the students.

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: What standard?

CLIVE PEARSON: So, you've got to have the air that changes 10 times an hour. You've got to have refrigeration, a proper mortuary table.

TIM SUTER: Who is setting that standard?

CLIVE PEARSON: The BIE.

TIM SUTER: Right.

CLIVE PEARSON: I am just touching quickly on the BIFD. So, once you've passed you can become a member of the BIFD and if you've done CPD through the 12, well, it's 12 hours at the moment. They then give you a licence to say you're actually doing your CPD through your training.

TIM SUTER: And as funeral directors do you all need to do CPD? Continued Professional Development?

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: No.

TIM SUTER: I can see, no. Okay. Sarah, I can see you.

SARAH JONES: I just have to go back to the fact that we've got training courses that are not based on any good standard. So, I have my qualification, but I do not agree with what I was taught and had to regurgitate as part of my qualification. There are things in there that I don't think are correct.

TIM SUTER: Okay. Like?

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: Can I just --?

TIM SUTER: Like?

SARAH JONES: Well, a really specific example, I guess. I don't know if this is like a graphic alert. But the idea of wadding, putting wadding down every single person's throat is not something I am comfortable with or need to do. So, we do not do that. We have very specific circumstances in which we have documented that that isn't an appropriate intervention. I think that's a thing. I don't think we should be doing that routinely without there being a good reason to do so. And that is in contrast to what I was taught in the funeral qualification that I have, which will stay nameless because that's not -- to this conversation.

TIM SUTER: Well, I am keen to move on but lastly?

ROSS HICKTON: Ross Hickton. You mentioned CPD.

TIM SUTER: Yes.

ROSS HICKTON: You do have to do 15 hours of CPD to keep your Appointed Representative FCA licence. But if you follow that chain through, if you've sold a funeral plan with CPD, that person then passes away, that funeral plan is then redeemed, because you're CPD, you're still a member of the FCA and a funeral director. That's correct, isn't it?

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: Sorry, but I believe not. I believe --

TIM SUTER: I don't think that is going to progress us so you can perhaps pick that one up separately. Codes of Practice. Again, this is only something -
- it is a big topic, and it is just one I want to touch on with one question.

Two Codes of Practice. Is that helpful?

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: No.

CARRIE WEEKES: Carrie Weekes, A Natural Undertaking. I am signed up to about five different Codes of Practice. So, I am a member of the Association of Green Funeral Directors which has guidance. All of them are just guides for us and what good practice might look like.

I'm signed up to SAIF. I'm a member of the Good Funeral Guide. I can't remember. There's loads.

But what they do is guide and inform the work that we do and the shape of the work that we do, principles underneath. There isn't a single set. It's not like being a lawyer or a doctor. It's not a profession in that there isn't a single set of kind of accepted practice.

TIM SUTER: If you take as an example, I think the SAIF Code of Practice has a requirement about whistleblowing. I don't think that's in the NAFD. If you're a member of both trade associations, what do you do? That was -- I have a wave.

SARAH JONES: Well, I guess what we've done is you take them both and you take what you like. I mean there are some sentences which are identical in both, which can't be a coincidence, but you take both. But I mean we're not a member of a trade association because of those, because I want to be inspected by them, by either of those standards. I'm a member of a trade association because I want to sell a certain type of funeral plan and I have to be a member of trade association. But the statements within both of those Codes, very few are directive and clear enough that it is actually an instruction. Most of it is behavioural guidance, thought-provoking statements, without definitions of things like best offices invasive. Like, these things are not defined so it's massively open to interpretation.

TIM SUTER: David?

DAVID BARRINGTON: From a business point of view when I was both SAIF and NAFD, yeah, very unhelpful. Why can't we just have one Code of Practice? Why can't SAIF and NAFD talk to each other and develop a single Code?

TIM SUTER: Do you think it creates risk for those who have died who are in your care?

DAVID BARRINGTON: Probably not because we comply with both of them. But with my running a business head on it just would be better -- they do, as Sarah says, they do really say the same thing. They want us to do the same thing, both Codes. So, can't they just be, you know, can't they talk to each other?

TIM SUTER: Why are there two?

DAVID BARRINGTON: Why are they different?

TIM SUTER: Why are there two Codes?

DAVID BARRINGTON: So, Ross will have a different view on this.

So, if we go back to the FSCSR. So, the NAFD decided, we were coming under a lot of pressure about our Code. It didn't cover the whole of the premises. Inspections were only to comply with the Code. So, there were certain parts of the buildings that were not covered.

NAFD then said, "Okay, let's have a complete review with independent input". So, there were some NAFD people involved.

There were also consumer bodies involved. There were people from SAIF involved and there were non-trade body members involved, of which at the time, I think, Sarah was one of them. Was it you?

Actually, it might have been Poppy.

SARAH JONES: With what? I'm sorry.

DAVID BARRINGTON: With FSCSR.

SARAH JONES: Yes, as was Poppy, yeah. We were both invited to...

DAVID BARRINGTON: So, there were also non-trade body members involved at the time. It took a long time, two years or more. They made recommendations. The NAFD always said it would adopt whatever the recommendations were, which we adopt in the Code. And then there was a discussion and SAIF produced their own Code and carried on with that. I don't know any of what happened. I wasn't involved in the discussions, so I don't know.

TIM SUTER: Okay, it does segue into session three, which is where I think is we are, which is 'does anything need to change'? I can see Natalya nodding her head. Rather than me asking the question, just tell us what your view is.

NATAYLA MCLACKLAND: Natalya McLackland. This is a personal one, but I think we should have really strict regulation. I think funeral premises should be licensed. I think a funeral director should be licensed. I think we should be a standard across the board where everybody is on the same path and part and where you can be because obviously everywhere is different and has different needs. But I am just all for regulation. I just think there should be standards, like CQC, like HTA and that's what we should be following in a licensed premises. Because going

back to some of the things that people have said, back of house is a massive problem at the moment. You've got people who spend millions of pounds on cars and do up their funeral homes. But you actually go round the back and see how it is that are actually being looked after. And I think that's what's really important. So, I like Ms Weekes's comment before when she said, "I let people go and have a look", because that's really important. I think we should. And we try and do something very similar. So, I'm all for it.

TIM SUTER: Did you have your hand up?

CLAIRE BARRINGTON: Yeah, Claire Barrington. I agree with Natalya. It's just it's long overdue. It's long overdue and it would give the public total peace of mind, talking about risk.

At times when they've lost somebody they're not thinking about risk, they're not thinking about... they might think about cost. They might think about what they're going to do. They're bereaved.

At that point there should be a complete gold standard where everyone has to be onboard, everyone is totally respected. And that's not in their mind at that point.

So, you've got pots of people here. You've got -- opened up businesses on a shoestring. You've got people who have got millions of pounds who operate massive, big operations. There's no single gold thread that just involves, you know. You have to have a minimum standard and that's what --

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: Can I ask whether or not the introduction of that independent regulation would have an impact on particularly the smaller

businesses and so on and so forth? Because clearly one needs to understand the consequences of moves that might be considered.

CLAIRE BARRINGTON: It would. And smaller operations, it would have a cost implication.

But I think there's going to be -- it's different to dictating you've got to have certain sizes of things as to levels of care. You've got to have you know like HTA with the regulations through mortuaries, I guess as an overview with the deceased in mind.

Funeral directors cover a lot more obviously for the business at the core. But the care element, the journey from start to finish, is what we bring.

TIM SUTER: Carrie?

CARRIE WEEKES: Carrie Weekes, A Natural Undertaking. My concern with a strict set of regulations is that at the moment the Codes of Practice issued by the trade associations and the work that was done by the FSCSR, impenetrable to the general public. So, the general public need excellent consumer education. They don't know what we do. They don't know what they're paying for. They don't know what they're buying.

And if we are in a market economy, the fact that all funeral directors are not the same is actually to everybody's benefit. You get to choose which funeral director you use. You don't get to choose which hospital mortuary your person is in however many reports are issued. You don't have any control over that.

You've got control at this point of which funeral director you choose.

And the fact that we're not all the same is a benefit to the

communities in which we live. That doesn't mean to say there isn't a golden thread of consistency of care but how that is enacted needs to be really carefully considered.

TIM SUTER: Are you concerned that regulation would --?

CARRIE WEEKES: Prohibit people like me setting up in the first place and I think I do a really good job.

TIM SUTER: Okay. David, you have had your hand up for a bit and then Sarah.

DAVID BARRINGTON: So just regarding licensing and CPD. So, we have just come back from, we went to the National Funeral Directors' Association Conference Convention in America. And over there everybody is licensed. Every funeral home is licensed. All the staff who work have to have CPD. They have to have continuing education. They have continual education credits. They have to go to mortuary school. They have to have a degree to be in the funeral business. And there will be a cost because there is a cost to everything there. So, all of the education, every single session you have to pay for. The workshops. We went to seven hours and unlike our conference here which effectively as a member I can go to our conference for free and attend sessions. It costs to have lunch, but I can actually attend everything else for free or within the cost of my membership. Over there it will cost you, just to go to the convention, will cost you \$700. So that's the starting point.

And over there it's not just the business owners that go, it's not the leaders of the business, it's the staff. All of the staff have got to go because they need to get their continuing education. So, from a cost point of view, yes, licensing will cost. There will be an implication to cost.

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: So, can I just be clear? Who licenses in the States?

DAVID BARRINGTON: The states themselves. They have to be state registered.

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: State registered, state licences.

TIM SUTER: So, it's not federal, okay.

SARAH JONES: Sarah Jones, Full Circle Funerals. I know the CPC Regulations very well because I've been a practising medic. I've been a non-exec. I've had social care. I've run a hospital. And all of those different dentists, I mean so many different types of healthcare fall under the same regulations because it's so well structured. And I just think funeral care can be the same.

There could be a standard under CQC that covers funeral care that means that Carrie can operate how she wants to, I can operate how I want to. Dignity can do their thing because if they can do it for ever -- a dentist versus an NHS Trust versus a private hospital, we can do it for funeral care.

TIM SUTER: Can I just unpack that slightly in the sense of it goes back to something Natalya said about regulation of the funeral home and regulation of the individual.

Do you all believe in both of those types of regulations? I can see Carrie is saying, "No". Others are saying "Yes". I would like to understand because they are quite different things. Yes.

CLAIRE BARRINGTON: Claire Barrington. I agree and I think having a basic bar will not differentiate, will not take away, the difference in personalities of each of those funeral homes.

The independents are different and running them will be different and they'll have different elements to the place in the community as a different type of funeral director and that's needed.

Having a basic elemental bar that the family would know -- again, if you ask a family on the street tomorrow, they will be surprised that a profession doesn't have full regulation.

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: But can we be clear? As Tim says it is a question of regulation of the business, as it were, i.e., the business. But actually, does that include a requirement, a regulatory requirement, for the staff that work in the business? Should they also be regulated professionals? Or is that not necessary?

TIM SUTER: David first perhaps and then Natalya.

DAVID BARRINGTON: David Barrington. Ideally, I would like our staff to have to do some training, ongoing training. Really, I suppose, controlling minds, at

least the controlling mind should have ongoing -- update their knowledge.

And of course, we do, we attend conventions, we go to conferences. But we try and take on -- we ask our staff to regularly whether they want to do more training. But they don't -- but it's not really compulsory. So ideally, yes. Both the leaders and the employees would be ideal.

TIM SUTER: Natalya?

NATAYLA MCLACKLAND: Natalya McLackland. The point I made with the two difference licences is just from experience. So, licensing I just think instils trust and you can show different things that you've done, modules and different kind of work. But for me the premises is really important, so I'd like to share an experience.

I am training in BIE for embalming, and I went to somebody else who are classed -- and they've got what is a shop front. And you go in and there's all these leather chairs, everything's amazing.

But when you actually go to do the embalming, there's a room here and there's a room there. You make your tea and your coffee here and you embalm them --

TIM SUTER: And so just for the transcript, you're saying they're very close together.

NATAYLA MCLACKLAND: So, I could be sat in front of the deceased and someone's there making a cup of tea, as close as what us two are.

TIM SUTER: Okay, so very close.

NATAYLA MCLACKLAND: And there's no ventilation in the room so you have to keep the door open. And it was just absolutely -- so I was, like, you've got to make sure you have embalming, you have ventilation, you have a place where if there isn't storage in there, like, you can put it in. So, I think the premises is really important.

We've been to other larger organisations who again, they're prepping in an area while they're polishing a coffin. And then they've got the restorative which is a chemical next to car wash. And it's just absolutely mind blowing.

And that's why this all ties in. Back of house, education, regulation, training. And that's how it all encompasses. And I would personally look to the Government to say, "Give me something to work with".

TIM SUTER: Okay. That feels like a very good place to wrap it up.

JANE CAMPBELL: Can I just ask very quickly? Obviously as Tim said at the start Scotland are looking to bring in some form of regulation. Are the people around this table watching with interest? Are they in touch with colleagues in Scotland? How are they preparing?

NATAYLA MCLACKLAND: Natalya McLackland. Yes, I have a friend who I've just been doing a course with, an NAFD course, and she is both Scotland and England. And she went to, I think it was NAFD Scotland. So, they had a look and she thought it was really good. She thought that Scotland were on the ball and why can't we be?

So that was her -- it was going the way that it was. How Scotland were doing it was how we should start.

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: Nigel Lymn-Rose. I think it was a great shame here though, because it was only last week, Scotland done something completely different from England and Wales. They've done the same with the registration. They've done the same with the documentation which is required for cremation. And there was a great opportunity for us to get together. And so, it's so ridiculous that transferring across the border from Scotland to England for a cremation, you've got to have different documentation. You can't go into in Scotland you've got to get permission to do that, it's crazy.

But I believe that there needs to be legislation and I believe the legislation need to be not up here, it needs to be here to make sure the basic things that people have a right to expect are absolutely covered.

And it's the same with staff, I mean we spent fortunes on staff training for hours and hours. But you need that certain level and then people can still compete in what they're doing and offering different processes. But it should be a minimum that no one can be allowed to drop below and still continue services.

TIM SUTER: What would you say happens if someone does fall below? Because obviously if you have a regulation for an individual in a healthcare setting, that's a fitness to practice issue. They could be struck off the register --

NIGEL LYMN-ROSE: I think exactly the same should happen in the funeral service. But the difficulty becomes, are you talking about an individual branch of this big organisation being closed? Or are you talking about the whole organisation being set up? And I think that's often where the difficulty comes from and where you've got people who --

But I don't think most- the majority of organisations have a problem anyway. I think we just want to see a right level focussed from what I said about I know there's a level that won't be dropped below on my new premises outside of our trading area.

It doesn't mean they're always the best, but it means they don't drop below anything in particular.

SARAH JONES: Sarah Jones, Full Circle. We need to not reinvent the wheel. In Care Homes you have a registered person who is responsible for the business. There is some responsibility. They have a registered manager in each individual service which is registered separately. We don't need to reinvent the wheel. We need to stick us in health and social care and just treat us like any other health and social care provider.

TIM SUTER: Thank you. Natalya?

NATAYLA MCLACKLAND: Natalya McLackland. I think everybody's completely right in a way, and I'd like to get that forward. But it's kind of, like, you do with Health and Safety, Environmental Officers. They give advice and guidance. They take action when they're enforce. There should be fines. If you're not up to scratch you should be closed down, if you're not up to scratch.

And I think that if this was to happen, you'll start weeding them out. The 20 or 25 per cent, that's not where we are supposed to be. And that basically lies to people--

TIM SUTER: I am conscious we have not heard from everyone on this particular issue. And I don't know whether, so Paul and yourself, have you got views about regulation and benefits, concerns, that you would like to share?

DAVID WRIGHT: David Wright. I think it should be regulated. This 25 per cent that are not members, they are not all bad. There's a lot of them that don't agree with NAFD and SAIF and they've left for that, but they're not bad in any way.

So, to keep them and to give the public confidence I think there does need to be a level. We don't seem to see in this country any news of really awful funeral premises. In America, where they are regulated, fairly regularly you see things which are really bad. So obviously regulation works.

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: Is that because they are identified because they are regulated?

DAVID WRIGHT: Possibly.

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: Whereas here, because there is no regulation or inspection, they are not necessarily identified.

DAVID WRIGHT: It could be that, yes.

TIM SUTER: Did you want to?

PAUL HILTON: Yeah, I'm all for regulation anyway. I think at the end of the day there should be, like, a bottom line. And if you drop below that bottom line, kick you out. Simple as that really because we're here to care. And if you drop below that line obviously, you're not caring. And if you're not caring you shouldn't be doing it.

TIM SUTER: Yes, okay. I think that probably wraps up this last session but is there anything else anyone else wants to share? That has been a very rapid coverage of quite a lot of ground. So, if there is anything anyone is really keen that we did not cover, David?

DAVID BARRINGTON: So, going back regarding regulation. At the moment the inspection regime of NAFD, SAIF. The problem with all of it is if the funeral director, if the individual business throws their toys out their cot and says, "I've had enough", they just leave. And they still open their door the next day. They still trade. Families still go in. So, the trade bodies are trying to encourage people to do things better. And as Sarah says, we are a very, very diverse group of people. We all do things very differently. So, they are trying to do that within that realm. But at the end of the day, we have to appreciate that nobody stops that funeral director from trading. They say, "Tough, I'm going to do what I want to do", and then they resign and the next day they carry on. So that's where the independent scrutiny becomes important because -- and there are, you know. There's a very large funeral director near to us who is not a member of any trade body. And yet

they're good. But I don't know what goes on behind the scenes there. But they've got a very good reputation, they've been there for a long time. So, it's a very wide range in --

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: But can I just be clear that what you are suggesting would suggest the requirement to have a statutory requirement which will allow then businesses to be shut down effectively.

DAVID BARRINGTON: Yeah.

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: Is that what --?

TIM SUTER: And everyone agrees with that? Carrie, you've got a --

CARRIE WEEKES: Carrie Weekes, A Natural Undertaking. My only concern about this is that talking about America, a friend of mine died at home in LA recently. And his wife, who used to work for me, wanted to look after him at home and do the funeral herself. She had to get the sponsorship of a licensed mortician to look after her own dead husband in his own home.

So, what I don't want there to be is a statutory obligation to require people to use a funeral director if they don't want to. So, we need to just look at the bigger philosophical question of who looks after the dead? Really there can't be a statutory regulation which makes people go into the private sector and spend 4 grand without having the options available to look after that person and do it themselves. I'm sorry. Thank you.

REBECCA CHALONER: Rebecca Chaloner. Tim, just on the point of if anybody has anything they feel they haven't said. You have all got our contact email address. Please do feel free if there are any thoughts you have leaving today, we would rather you send them to us and us have the benefit and wisdom of them than not.

SIR JONATHAN MICHAEL: Yes, so as Tim said, we are just after 1.00 pm. So, thank you very much for indeed for coming along and helping. It has been really useful. And I am clearly going to consider what we have heard very carefully.

And as Rebecca says, if there is anything else you think about, you think it would be helpful for us to know or information or examples you would like to share with us, just be in touch with the Inquiry team.

Once we have completed the seminars what we plan to do is to place the recordings and transcripts on our website. But we are not going to do that until we have completed all the discussions so that we do not influence future discussions by what is on the website now. And we will let you know beforehand before we do.

So meanwhile, without making too much of an issue about it, I would be grateful if you would just keep the discussions, we have had today confidential until we publish on the website.

And you have all seen the protocol, which was sent to you beforehand, so if you just bear that in mind, we would be very grateful.

Thank you very much indeed for your time and for your help. It has been really useful.