

## **Independent Inquiry into the issues raised by the David Fuller Case launches Interim Report: Chair makes urgent call for regulation of the funeral sector**

The Independent Inquiry into the issues raised by the David Fuller Case is today launching an interim report on the funeral care sector.

The report's chief recommendation is that the UK Government should urgently establish an independent statutory regulatory regime for funeral directors in England, to safeguard the security and dignity of the deceased.

Phase 2 of the Inquiry is looking at the broader national picture regarding the procedures and practices in place to protect the deceased. Given recent reports of cases of neglect in the funeral care sector, and the crucial findings already emerging from Phase 2, the Inquiry is today publishing an interim report.

Sir Jonathan Michael, Chair of the Inquiry, said:

"I had originally intended to publish my findings and recommendations on the funeral sector as part of the Inquiry's Phase 2 Report. I have, however, expedited the Inquiry's work in this area, in light of the recent distressing reports of neglect in the funeral sector.

"For most people, their experience of funeral services happens at some of the most difficult times in their lives. They are vulnerable in their grief and distress. We often trust our recently deceased into the care of funeral directors, expecting that they will be treated with kindness, dignity and respect.

"Based on the Inquiry's examination of the funeral sector, it is fair to say that, in most cases, this is true. The funeral directors I have met in conducting this Inquiry have been caring and professional. However, sadly, there are exceptions.

"It is clear to me that many people believe or assume that the sector is already regulated, and they are shocked to find this is not the case. The fact is that anyone can set themselves up as a funeral director. They could do it from their home and keep the bodies of the deceased in their garage without anybody being able to stop them. That cannot be right.

"My hope is that publishing this interim report now will assist both the Government and the funeral sector itself to take steps that assure the public that care in the funeral sector is fit for purpose. We need a regulatory regime that will not tolerate any form of abuse or any practices that compromise the security and dignity of the deceased.

"I would like to acknowledge and thank the more than 150 individuals and organisations who shared information and evidence with us for this interim report.

With the contributions of all the witnesses, I believe that we have produced a detailed, evidence-based and comprehensive picture of what happens today and what needs to change.”

## **ENDS**

For media inquiries please email [fuller inquiry@luther.co.uk](mailto:fuller inquiry@luther.co.uk) or telephone 020 7618 9110.

## **Background to the Inquiry**

In November 2021, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care announced an independent inquiry into the issues raised by the actions of David Fuller, the maintenance supervisor who committed sexual offences in the mortuaries of the Kent and Sussex Hospital and the Tunbridge Wells Hospital.

The Inquiry was split into two phases. This first phase of the Inquiry, on matters relating to Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust, concluded in November 2023 with the publication of our Phase 1 Report. Phase 2 is looking at the broader national picture and the implications of the issues identified in Phase 1 for the NHS and for other settings.