



Funerals and Bereavement

11 March 2021

Dear Commissioner

I am sure that you are aware of the immense pressure the pandemic has had on frontline workers across the UK. It is right that workers from a wide range of sectors are celebrated for the work they have been doing and continue to do in very difficult circumstances to keep the country going.

It is troubling, therefore, that funeral directors and others operating within the funeral and death care sector have been held liable for breaches of the regulations that are plainly out of their control. I refer to reports of funeral directors and venue owners being held liable for mourners who break the COVID-19 regulations at services. This, coupled with direct threats of intimidation toward directors with little or no police support in some instances, has created a deeply troublesome situation.

In my role as Chair of the [All-Party Parliamentary Group for Funerals and Bereavement](#) I have heard first-hand from members of the Deceased Management Advisory Group (DMAG) on the issues they have been confronted with. This has included reports of workers being threatened with knives when having to refuse entry to the cemetery after more than 30 mourners were in attendance. Previous discussions with representatives from Surrey, Hertfordshire and Nottinghamshire Police forces have resulted in funeral directors being told that it is their responsibility to take appropriate action to guard against large numbers of mourners. This includes the cancellation of a funeral, which does not solve the problem and creates further legal uncertainty.

An agreed protocol is therefore required that is clearly communicated with relevant members of the funeral and death care sector and police forces across the UK. Recent examples have shown that clear dialogue between funeral sector workers and police forces can form effective strategies that protect those operating within the sector. Included in any guidance should be the provision of police personnel to support funeral directors and venue owners remaining compliant with COVID-19 regulations.

Chair: Sir John Hayes MP

Vice Chairs: Dame Diana Johnson MP, Rosie Cooper MP, Gavin Robinson MP, Sir David Amess MP, Mark Pawsey MP and Robert Goodwill MP

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There is a responsibility on all of us to ensure that those who are often putting their own health at risk to enable funeral services to continue are sufficiently protected.

I have also written to the Home Office on this matter and look forward to hearing from you as a matter of urgency. I would be happy to discuss this further and you would be welcome to attend a future meeting of the APPG to discuss the issue with our members.

Yours sincerely,

Rt Hon Sir John Hayes MP

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