

<b>Title of Report</b>	Dignity for the Deceased: update on implementing recommendations from Phase 2 of the Fuller Inquiry		
<b>Author(s)</b>	Emmanuel Ross Programme & Projects Officer, Public Health  Chris Lovitt Deputy Director of Public Health		
<b>Director Sponsor</b>	Sandra Husbands Director of Public Health		
<b>Meeting Title</b>	Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission	<b>Meeting Date</b>	15.01.2026

<b>Purpose of the Report</b>	
<b>For Discussion &amp; Input</b>	

<b>Summary</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Fuller Inquiry was set up to look at how David Fuller was able to carry out abuse of the deceased at Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust Mortuary and issued an initial phase 1 report in November 2023.</li><li>• A phase 2 report was subsequently published in July 2025 containing recommendations as to how policy, procedures and practices in mortuaries, hospitals, hospices, ambulances, care homes and the funeral sector needed to be improved to safeguard the security and dignity of the deceased</li><li>• This report sets out how local Hackney based organisations have responded to the recommendations and further work planned for completion in 2026</li></ul>

<b>Key Issues</b>	
1	The two public mortuaries in Hackney operated by the Council and the Homerton Healthcare Foundation Trust NHS have now implemented measures to ensure compliance with the Fuller Inquiry recommendations with additional work to ensure full compliance planned to take place in 2026.

2	The Council has written to other local organisations to highlight improvements identified by the Fuller Inquiry. However, the regulation of these providers is outside of the scope of local authorities and whilst clarifying their regulation was recommended by the Inquiry this is still being considered by national Government..
3	The government published their interim response to the inquiry in December 2025 detailing where they had accepted the recommendations in full, accepted the recommendation in principle or where recommendations were still under consideration. A further update is due in the summer of 2026.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1. In December 2021, David Fuller was convicted of murdering two women and found to have abused, over a period of 12 years, the deceased bodies held at two Kent based hospital morgues where he worked as an electrician.
- 1.2. An independent inquiry was established chaired by Sir Jonathan Michael. The first part of the inquiry looked at how the abuse had taken place for such a long period without detection.
- 1.3. Phase 2 of the inquiry, published in July 2025, found that the current arrangements in England for the regulation and oversight of the care of people after death “are partial, ineffective and, in significant areas, completely lacking”.
- 1.4. Extensive and wide ranging recommendations for improvements across a wide range of sectors were made both at the local and national level.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. To note the progress made on implementing the recommendations at the two public mortuaries in Hackney and that full implementation is planned for 2026.
- 2.2. To note the work being undertaken to communicate the recommendations of the inquiry to relevant organisations operating in Hackney.
- 2.3. To consider whether a further update report is required in late 2026 on local and national implementation.

## **3. Current picture**

- 3.1. Care of the deceased in Hackney takes place in multiple settings with varying operational models, regulation and governance structures
- 3.2. Settings in Hackney that have responsibility for caring for the deceased include Hackney Public Mortuary, Homerton Hospital Mortuary, independent Funeral Directors, St Joseph's hospice and independent care homes

## **Scrutiny, Governance and Regulation**

- 3.3. The Inquiry identified a mixed picture of regulation of the various sectors that care for the deceased and made extensive national and local recommendations for improvements.
- 3.4. Whilst public mortuaries and hospital mortuaries are regulated and inspected by the Human Tissue Authority (HTA) the Inquiry recommended that the reporting of issues, processes for escalation and oversight to relevant Directors, boards and committees needed significant strengthening.
- 3.5. The inquiry published an interim report<sup>1</sup> in October 2024 into the funeral sector which along with the full Phase 2 report made recommendations that they should be subject to a national regulatory and inspection regime to replace the the non-mandatory accreditation schemes available
- 3.6. Whilst the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspects and regulates the provision of care provided in health settings, care homes and hospices its remit did not extend to areas where the deceased are stored pending a funeral. The Inquiry made recommendations that the remit of CQC and HTA in relation to these settings should be clarified.

## **Hackney Public Mortuary**

- 3.7. A public mortuary has operated in Hackney since 1890 for the reception of the deceased and the carrying out of post mortems as required by the Inner London Coroner.
- 3.8. In 2024 Hackney council temporarily closed the local mortuary and temporarily transferred care of the deceased to St Pancras mortuary to enable a year-long £2 million improvement and modernisation programme. This included increasing capacity of storage facilities for the deceased, increasing energy efficiency of fridge and freezers and implementing expected recommendations from the Fuller Inquiry relating to extensive security improvements.
- 3.9. The local mortuary fully reopened in January 2025 and with the publication of the Phase 2 Fuller Inquiry in July 2025 a detailed assessment of the recommendations relevant for the mortuary were made.
- 3.10. The Inquiry made 25 recommendations for local authority mortuaries covering physical security, policy, procedures, reporting lines and accountability.
- 3.11. Throughout the summer of 2025 Hackney mortuary worked to review and update all 72 Standard Operating Procedures to ensure compliance with the recommendations.
- 3.12. The recommendations relating to management and oversight were already met with the Director of Public Health being the Senior Responsible Officer for the Mortuary.

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<sup>1</sup> [David Fuller inquiry: phase 2 interim report - GOV.UK](https://gov.uk)

- 3.13. The required programme of annual audits reporting to the Audit Committee had already been established and the recommended peer review every three years is currently being planned.

### **Private Funeral Directors**

- 3.14. The Inquiry made extensive recommendations for improvements in practice and regulation of private funeral directors.
- 3.15. The Government's interim response to the Inquiry recommendations published in December 2025 details that these recommendations are still under consideration and a further update is expected in the summer of 2026.
- 3.16. In the autumn of 2025 Hackney council wrote to the 8 local funeral directors highlighting the importance of the Fuller Inquiry recommendations and requesting they provide a summary of the actions they have taken to implement the recommendations.
- 3.17. Two responses were received and a further request will be made in January 2026. However, the Council is unable to compel a response and there is currently no licensing or compulsory registration scheme.
- 3.18. Separately, there are a number of membership organisations that give accreditation including the National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors (SAIF) and the National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD)
- 3.19. While membership is not mandatory, seven of the eight Hackney-based FDs are accredited by one or both of the two membership schemes listed above
- 3.20. The Council currently contracts the Hackney based Co-op Funeralcare to provide for Public Health funerals, locally called Public Dignity Funerals. As part of this contract the council is working with the Co-op to ensure they can demonstrate compliance with best practice.
- 3.21. A new contract for Public Dignity Funerals will be commissioned from April 2026 and the service specification for this service will include ensuring compliance with relevant recommendations made by the Inquiry.
- 3.22. Hackney is part of the Inner London Coronal District with Camden as the lead authority. As part of this arrangement a single contract covering the District is held by Camden with Jackson's Hub funeral director based in Kent for the transportation of the deceased to and from the Council's mortuaries. Jackson's Hub have confirmed compliance with the recommendations of the Inquiry.
- 3.23. Separately, at the request of the Ministry of Justice, Hackney Trading Standards visited Funeral Directors in the borough to assess compliance in light of the findings of Fuller Phase 2.
- 3.24. Hackney Trading Standards supports the Inquiry's recommendation that a regulatory framework urgently be introduced for the funeral sector, and is committed to the ongoing evaluation and enhancement of funeral service practices.

### **Homerton Hospital Mortuary**

- 3.25. The Homerton Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust operates a mortuary at their Homerton site.
- 3.26. The Homerton fully reviewed the recommendations of the Inquiry in July 2025 and then implemented a programme of improvements to ensure full compliance.
- 3.27. In accordance with the recommendations the Homerton's Chief Nurse is the Senior Responsible Officer for the operations of the Mortuary and a report detailing their compliance was presented to the Trust's Quality Committee on 16 Dec 2025.

### **St Joseph's Hospice**

- 3.28. Residents needing end of life care in Hackney are served by St Joseph's Hospice on Mare Street.
- 3.29. The Director of Care and the Director of Finance have established a working group to carry out a review of policies and procedures in light of the recommendations from the Inquiry.
- 3.30. Hospice UK have updated their Care After Death guidance<sup>2</sup> for the Hospice Sector to take into account the recommendations of the Inquiry.
- 3.31. The Government has accepted in full the Inquiry Recommendations in relation to the Hospice sector audit and security requirements and is still considering their response to the recommendations to be included in scope for statutory regulation of the deceased.

### **Care Homes**

- 3.32. Although Care Homes are regulated by the Care Quality Commission to ensure they provide safe, effective and high quality care this regulation does not extend to arrangements when they have deceased.
- 3.33. The Inquiry made recommendations for improvements to both arrangements in Care Homes and also clarification for who and how regulation of the deceased is undertaken.
- 3.34. The Government is still considering their response to the recommendations for regulatory changes to the Care sector.
- 3.35. In early 2026 Hackney council will be writing to local care providers to highlight the Inquiry Recommendations and request an update on how they intend to implement improvements.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.hospiceuk.org/publications-and-resources/care-after-death>

#### **4. Summary**

- 4.1. The Fuller Inquiry has made extensive recommendations to improve how the deceased are cared for to ensure their dignity, respect, security and in so doing reduce the likelihood that any further criminal activities could take place or for such a long period without detection.
- 4.2. The Council and the Homerton have already implemented extensive and wide ranging improvements as recommended by the Inquiry and have been working with a wide range of local partners to raise awareness and encourage implementation of findings in the other local providers.
- 4.3. The Government has already fully implemented 11 recommendations, accepted in principle 43 and is still considering 21 recommendations. The Committee may wish to consider whether it would like a further update on implementation in a year's time on both local and national implementation of the remaining recommendations.