

FOR PUBLICATION

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority
30 March 2023

SUBJECT: BRIEFING ON THE REVEREND JAMES JONES REPORT ON THE HILLSBOROUGH DISASTER

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Background Papers: 'The patronising disposition of unaccountable power'. A report to ensure the pain and suffering of the Hillsborough families is not repeated by The Right Reverend James Jones KBE

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	The Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy	N/A

Implications

This table provides a short statement of the impact of the recommendations in this report and/or a reference to the relevant paragraph/s in the report.

Will this report affect any of the following?

	Yes / No	Impact / Reference
Financial Implications	No	
Risk Management	No	No direct impact. Many aspects of the six objectives of the Charter already aligns with the minimum standards of behavior expected from employees of the Authority as set out in extant policies and procedures.

Legal Implications	Yes	The Charter is a statement of intent that the Authority ‘will strive’ to comply with its six objectives. There have been attempts to introduce legislation to oblige public bodies and officials to make all their dealings, with families and with official bodies, more transparent including a duty to assist the courts, official inquiries, and investigations. This has previously been outlined in a Public Authority (Accountability) Bill, known colloquially as the “Hillsborough Law” after the Hillsborough Inquiry in April 2017, but this did not progress beyond a second reading in Parliament.
Privacy and Security Implications	No	
Duty to Collaborate	Yes	The Policing and Crime Act 2017 requires the Authority to consider opportunities for collaboration with the police and ambulance services. Both the College of Policing and the National Police Chiefs’ Council (on behalf of all 43 police forces in England and Wales) have signed up to the Charter.
Health and Safety Implications	No	
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	Yes	Adoption of the Charter is consistent with the Authority’s obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty to have regard to the need to, i.e., advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
Environmental Sustainability	No	
Consultation and Communication	Yes	At a meeting on 30 November 2022 of the National Fire Chiefs Council (on which Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is represented) the NFCC Chairman recommended that fire and rescue services promote the charter and to sign up to it if they have not already done so. If the Charter is adopted a copy of the signed and completed document will be promoted on the Authority’s website

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to ask the Authority to sign up to The Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy (included as the Appendix to this report).

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that 'The Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy' be adopted and be attested by the signatures of the Chairman and the Chief Fire Officer.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report aims to provide an insight into what the bereaved Hillsborough families have experienced over the 28 years which have passed since April 1989, and to place that insight on the official public record.
- 1.2 Following the 2017 Manchester Arena bombing and preceding the establishment by the Home Secretary on 22 October 2019 of the Manchester Arena statutory public inquiry, [The Kerslake Report](#) was published on the 27 March 2018 . An [interim 'progress report'](#) providing an update on the work of the Review was published on 12 January 2018. This contained a recommendation from Lord Kerslake that public bodies adopt one of the 'points of learning' within '[The patronising disposition of unaccountable power](#)' report by the Right Reverend James Jones KBE to sign up to a 'Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy'.
- 1.3 The Right Reverend Jones had been commissioned by Theresa May, as Home Secretary, following the conclusion of the Hillsborough inquests in 2016. The report identified 24 other 'points of learning' describing the changes that the Right Reverend Jones believed were necessary, following his experiences as chairman of the Hillsborough Independent Panel, including proper participation of bereaved families at inquests and the introduction of a duty of candour for police officers. Such a duty had already been introduced in the NHS by [Regulation 20 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008](#) (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014, following Sir Robert Francis' [inquiry into Mid-Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust](#) published by the House of Commons on 6 February 2013 .

1.4 The, then, Chairman of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) signed the NFCC up to the Charter on 9 May 2018¹.

2. Contents of the Review

2.1 The report is divided into the following thematic chapters:

- Chapter 1 – Treatment of the bereaved families in the aftermath of the Hillsborough disaster
- Chapter 2 – Inquests
- Chapter 3 – Public inquiries
- Chapter 4 – Criminal and disciplinary investigations

2.2 The report contains 25 points of learning across a range of subjects. The report considers each to be vitally important, but three are seen as crucial.

- First, the creation of a Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy – a charter inspired by the experience of the Hillsborough families.
- Second, there is a pressing need for what is described in this report as ‘proper participation’ of bereaved families at inquests.
- Third, the call for the establishment of a ‘duty of candour’ for police officers.

3 Actions for Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

3.1 The contents of the report have been reviewed and a gap analysis is being completed against the recommendations contained within the report. It should be noted that a number of these recommendations are mainly specific to the Police and criminal justice system.

3.2 The gap analysis will be reviewed by the corporate management team and any areas which are found to be amber or red will be addressed.

¹ [Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy \(nationalfirechiefs.org.uk\)](http://nationalfirechiefs.org.uk)

4 RECOMMENDATIONS:

4.1 That Members acknowledge the contents of the report.

4.2 That the Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy is adopted and signed by the Chief Fire Officer and the Chairman.

**STEVE FRANK
HEAD OF STRATEGIC SUPPORT AND ASSURANCE**

The Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy

In adopting this charter, we commit to ensuring that **Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority** learns the lessons of the Hillsborough disaster and its aftermath, so that the perspective of the bereaved families is not lost.

We commit to **Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority** becoming an organisation which strives to:

1. In the event of a public tragedy, activate its emergency plan and deploy its resources to rescue victims, to support the bereaved and to protect the vulnerable.
2. Place the public interest above our own reputation.
3. Approach forms of public scrutiny – including public inquiries and inquests – with candour, in an open, honest and transparent way, making full disclosure of relevant documents, material and facts. Our objective is to assist the search for the truth. We accept that we should learn from the findings of external scrutiny and from past mistakes.
4. Avoid seeking to defend the indefensible or to dismiss or disparage those who may have suffered where we have fallen short.
5. Ensure all members of staff treat members of the public and each other with mutual respect and with courtesy. Where we fall short, we should apologise straightforwardly and genuinely.
6. Recognise that we are accountable and open to challenge. We will ensure that processes are in place to allow the public to hold us to account for the work we do and for the way in which we do it. We do not knowingly mislead the public or the media.

Signed:

Chairman

Signed:

Chief Fire Officer