

The Charter for Bereaved: PHW Summary Note of All Wales Executive Workshop 02

Introduction

- First event – worked through implications.
- Second event – commitment to come together to understand more and why.
- Commitment uk gov – Hillsborough Bill will become law very shortly.
- Create a legal duty of candour
- One thing to be legally compelled - another to do it voluntarily.
- Must always strive to adhere and live up to the commitments of the charter.

Speakers

1. Geoff Edwards (Aberfan Survivor, 1966). Highlight the need for lifetime ongoing support.
2. Margaret Aspell; lost her son in 1989 at Hillsborough.
3. Sue Roberts; lost her brother Graham at Hillsborough.
4. Paul Price; survivor of Manchester Arena Bombing – lost his partner who was a serving officer.
5. Edd Dunn; escaped from 16th Floor of Grenfell tower – best known for raising concerns regularly and systematically prior to incident.

Bishop James Jones

- Essential we hear by people who have experienced/suffered from the events we speak of.
- No public bodies can progress with embedding the charter without hearing the voice of those who have suffered tragedy.
- The report; [The patronising disposition of unaccountable power...](#)
- Words are not enough – words must lead to change....
- The Charter changes culture. Leaders must see the vision and embrace change...
- 335 lost in the 3 events discussed today; 144 in Aberfan, 97 in Hillsborough, 22 Manchester Arena, 72 in Grenfell.
- Grief is a journey without destination with milestones along the way.
- Two of the most influential people in my life lived in Wales – Great Aunt in Brecon, Chaplin at school, Rev Clifford Davies, and wife Laura. It was Clifford Davies' brother, Lord Chief Justice Davies who chaired the inquiry into Aberfan...

Geoff Davies; Aberfan 1966

- Millions of tonnes of waste slipped down the Hillside and engulfed Pantglas School.
- 144 people died - 116 children, 28 adults.
- Coal authority took no responsibility for the incident.
- Only towards the end of the inquiry did the coal authority accept responsibility
- Nobody lost their jobs, served time or was punished as a result.
- Full description of the day...
- Roaring sound – teacher thought it was thunder – wasn't it was the sound of the landside approaching...
- Buried alive – small aperture of light above.
- Dead classmate (girl) to left.
- Out of 34 – only 4 survived.
- Many died screaming using up the pockets of air
- Rescued by fireman – Geoff wanted to recover his felt pens!

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- 1100hrs – Geoff last to come out alive. No ambulances left, taken to hospital in the Grocers van.
- **Psychological injuries most impactful – recollections of the dead girl on shoulder, screams and being the last out alive.**
- **Geoff learnt to live with the impacts, some succumbed to prescription drugs, alcohol, some parents never came out of their homes – waiting for children to return home.**
- **Sent to a child Psychologists – told to think happy thoughts such as birthday parties – ‘really – but all my mates that should be at the party died in the school’**
- Take time to offer support – everyone will deal with the grief in different ways. Engage and apply services to support individually.
- Funds came into the community to commemorate the incident. Government of the day suggested using a proportion of the fund to remove the tips. Massive discord in the town – protests to Welsh office as they felt this should be paid for separately. It went ahead, but the money was returned much later by the Welsh government under Rhodri Morgan.
- **Charter will give people affected a voice in the aftermath of disaster, and also feel that they will be heard.**

Margaret Aspell; Hillsborough 1989

- Hillsborough Families group. We are here to do the right thing – signing the charter is really important.
- **‘We had a terrible terrible time – fighting establishment and media’**
- Had to go cap in hand to raise funds to defend loved ones
- **They weren’t drunk, ticketless, late....**
- **Total lies from the beginning – by media**
- **Hillsborough Families won the battle with the unlawful killing verdict.**
- Margaret went into parliament post-verdict and spoke to those present (also House of Lords). Told them that they should be ashamed about the cover ups that went on.’
- Lessons haven’t been learnt – examples of Manchester Arena Bombing, Grenfell.
- Also referenced Jimmy Saville, Cyril Smith... ‘people knew’
- **Culture has to change for the good of the nation, for the good of the ordinary people.**
- Never give up – change can happen, but you have to be strong, together and consistent.
- The powers that be – they are no better than me...’
- Even now – Margaret gets upset talking about James – it was the first away game he attended. Just turned 18yrs.
- Margaret actually watched the disaster unfold on TV.
- Waited and waited for a phone call – had to call the hospital, not there.
- Hearing from the TV that 7, then 19 had died...
- **Husband went to Sheffield to look for James.**
- **‘Don’t come home without him...’**
- Panic and emotion at home and with other siblings immense.
- Jim returned home without James in the car – ran away...
- **Husband shouted after her ‘please don’t catch me up, if you don’t catch me up, he cant be dead’**
- Didn’t find out James had died until 6am until the following morning.
- 5 days later went to Sheffield to bring James home – took his coat
- **‘We are sorry love he doesn’t belong to you anymore, he belongs to the coroner’**
- **Remember screaming ‘he is mine, he is mine, just give him to me...’**

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- This charter is so important as these lies, this culture has got to stop – please, so that others don't have to suffer the way the Hillsborough families did
- **I was brought up to believe the police told the truth – why do we need a duty of candour to tell the truth.**
- **Do the right thing, sign that charter.**

Sue Roberts; Hillsborough 1989

- Very similar story – no detail given.
- Dad passed away tormented
- **Lies came from the top, filtered down.**
- **Things must change – lead with truth and honesty.**

Paul Price, Manchester Arena Bombings, May 2017

- Elaine DC with Cheshire Police.
- Took daughter and her friends to concert.
- First concert on their own – dropped them off and went for a walk to cover time.
- Waiting in foyer waiting for concert to end.
- People start coming out.
- **Last person to know Elaine had been killed – 3weeks later after coming out of a coma.**
- **Moment lost due to medication at the time.**
- Nothing made sense at the time.
- Injuries were life changing – bed bound, tracheotomy, throat burns, shrapnel, tib, fib & fema shattered and in a lot of pain.
- **Trying to come to terms with physical injuries and loss of Elaine.**
- Told never walk unaided again. Had to learn walk, talk, eat again.
- **Constantly being told – so much being done for the survivors. 'Don't worry you will be taken care of...'**
- On leaving hospital – fell off a cliff – secondary trauma, institutionalised.
- Moved in with elderly parents – couldn't cope - still more surgery required and face possibility of losing a leg.
- Nobody knocking on the door – no support offered, had been forgotten
- Descended into depression – couldn't leave the house, could access benefits...
- 'Felt like I was on trial in this new world I was forced to live in'
- Last 7 ½ years have been a journey – it seemed never ending.
- Lost my purpose in life – lost person I was, no direction – 'what do I do with my life'
- Now volunteer for homicide victim support' – give purpose.
- 'All these things I stumbled on myself' – not helped.
- **One minute she was standing next to me, the next she's gone....**
- **'I cant even remember Elaine's funeral – she was robbed of me, but my bereavement was robbed.'**
- **Meeting the pathologist (Mike Parsons) was a really positive thing – 'meant the world to me' able to ask little questions. Thanked him for giving Paul the opportunity.**
- Living for the last 7 1/2years on their savings. Now cant do the things they had dreamt of doing as the money has gone to support Paul now – no external support
- **'Scared of the future'**

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- **'Need Elaine to tell me what to do...'**

Ed Dunn (Grenfell Tower)

- Hot summer evening.
- 0100hrs, neighbours fire alarm going off
- **Unconcerned at this time.**
- Shouting in the communal area.
- **Opened the door – confronted by black swirling smoke.**
- **Feeling of dread – advice in advance given was to stay put.**
- Neighbour called – 'get out'
- **Left with keys, phone and oyster card.**
- Closed front door behind him
- **Aimed for emergency exit – hit a wall in black smoke.**
- **Disorientated and panicked.**
- **Firefighter had opened the emergency door and grabbed Ed and pulled him out into the emergency stairwell.**
- **Only there as a neighbour has begged firefighters to come up to the floor to rescue an elderly gent who had refused to leave**
- **Ran downstairs and to local sports centre**
- **Looked back at the building and saw massive fire, people in windows shouting for help.**
- **'Was in complete trauma – not in a good place'**
- Next thing recalled was a police officer screaming for people to get back.
- Advised that buses would come and pick us up – never came.
- **Riot squad on site to help with public disorder (image and impact of this awful – message it sends)**
- In the end helped with evacuation, but not what you expect to see when evacuated....
- **Comfort and support came for local community and not the authorities...**
- **Health and Safety: Ed had been lobbying the landlord and the LA prior to the incident as the challenges of the building were clearly documented.**
- **Landlord wasn't listening to the residents, LA not prepared to deal with the landlord.**
- As a result, no improvements were made – impacts were devastating.
- **Post-incident, the LA appeared to be more concerned with reputation than supporting the residents.**
- **'How in the 5/6 richest country in the world can the authorities leave people abandoned in the street in the aftermath of incidents such as Grenfell?'**
- **Grenfell residents wanted 3 things; Truth, justice and Change.**
- **Authorities came to the inquiry and provided 'a carousel of finger-pointing'**
- **'Should have come to the inquiry and 'be honest'**
- Paul feels that **'The truth when provided is part of the healing process'**
- The stance taken by public bodies inflicted further pain and suffering for those affected.
- **'Over 200 gave accounts at the inquiry – I can count on 1 hand those that gave a truthful account'**
- **'Do we have a culture that embraces, respects, and listens to those that have the information?'**

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Panel Discussion

- Geoff Edwards, Margaret Aspell, Sue Roberts, Paul Price, Edd Dunn, Bishop James Jones & Chief Constable, Jeremy Griffiths, South Wales Police.

Questions

Tracy Daszkiewicz: What was the one interaction you would like to have received which never occurred?

- **Ed:** The lack of candour – the one thing we wanted was the truth, and we never got it.
- **Geoff:** A continuation of the initial support received as this is a journey, there isn't really an endpoint. You should plan for the long-term future.
- **Paul:** I slipped through the net – promised so very much and received so little. I would hate to think this
- **Margaret:** to be treated as a human being, and to listen to people tell the truth.

Legal Exec, Carms CC: What is your view of the law and the legal system as a result of your experience with it?

- **Geoff:** As minors, nobody considered the children's views and we were not involved. The one reflection is the time it took, and the point reached before the Coal Board took responsibilities.
- **Margaret:** The legal profession was an absolute disgrace (to the Hillsborough families at least). She felt that there was more support for the perpetrators than the victims. So much money was given to them to defend the indefensible. No equity.
- **NB.** All four public bodies were publicly funded for the inquiry – the families weren't. Theresa May was the first Prime Minister the first to actually listen and help the families get the outcome which was deserved.
- **Paul:** system was a mystery to him – painfully slow, without understanding of why it took so long. When things came to a head at the inquiry – the legal representation was disgraceful, with excuses and blame for others.
- **Ed:** Experience of the inquiry was that we weren't being treated with the respect we should have been. We were 'shoved to the side' in the court to make way for the lawyers and media to take centre stage. Concerned that Grenfell will turn into another Hillsborough, with the long wait for justice.
During the inquiry it was obvious that the core participants were challenged by reputational impact versus the duty to be candid.

Craig Flannery, MWWFRS: Public sectors over the years appear to have become too corporate and forgotten that the public remain at the heart of what we do. How do we change culture to have that ethical leadership and moral courage to deal with those conflicted situations?

- **Chief Constable, Jeremy Griffiths, South Wales Police:** Are we talking about trust, our own reputation or the reputation of our organisations. There is no doubt that organisations who are honest will be more trusted.

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Closure

Bishop James Jones

- The Charter presents six commitments that an organisation should prioritise in the event of an emergency or major incident. These are:
 - In the event of a public tragedy, support the activation of emergency plans and deployment of resources to rescue victims, to support the bereaved and to protect the vulnerable.
 - Place the public interest above our own reputation.
 - 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.
 - Avoid seeking to defend the indefensible or to dismiss or disparage those who may have suffered where we have fallen short.
 - 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.
 - 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.

...**'We should go away from this not likely, but seriously.'**

Mark Travis

Quote from Grenfell Inquiry; 'Certain aspects of the response demonstrated a distinct lack of respect for human dignity and decency'

- We have heard from people today why this is so important.
- We would like to be the first country in the UK which adopts this by every public sector organisation.
- South Wales Police (Welsh Forces) will issue a template document for organisations to sign and add a logo to support.
- This will be the start point for change-culture in emergency response.