



Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy

SFRS adoption of the Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy

28 February 202

Background

The Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy comes from the Hillsborough Disaster and is about preventing a repeat of the problems that families faced during the Inquiry. The charter asks organisations to commit to learning lessons from Hillsborough and its aftermath to ensure the perspective of bereaved families is not lost in any future public tragedies.

This was reinforced during the Kerslake Arena Review following the Manchester Arena bombings in May 2017. A recommendation was made that the leaders of public bodies support the proposal contained in the Hillsborough report by signing up to a 'Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy.'

Wider adoption and application of the charter again featured in feedback from representatives for bereaved families during the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) are recommending all Fire and Rescue Services across the UK adopt the charter.

The need for a Charter

The framework that currently exists to investigate the tragic circumstances behind incidents such as the Hillsborough disaster and the Grenfell Tower fire, is complex and will often involve multiple agencies. Families can face an enormous challenge in understanding the roles of various agencies and to participate meaningfully in the numerous legal or investigative procedures.

They must do this at the same time as coming to terms with what has happened to them. This is likely to be overwhelming and to add to the suffering of bereaved families and/or survivors.

Aims of the Charter

Signing up to the Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy will provide additional assurance to our communities should a similar event happen within Surrey.

Adoption of the charter will align Surrey Fire and Rescue Service with partner Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) within the 4F group (Kent, East and West Sussex FRSs), The National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC), The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and other UK Fire and Rescue Services. The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) are recommending all FRSs, across the UK, adopt the charter.

The Charter


Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy

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

I commit to Surrey Fire and Rescue Service becoming an organisation which strives to:

- 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.
- 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.

Signed



Dan Quin
Chief Fire Officer
Surrey Fire and Rescue Service
28 February 2023

Background papers

Kerslake Arena Review - Progress report on the work of the independent panel – 12th January 2018

<https://www.kerslakearenareview.co.uk/media/1020/kerslake-arena-review-progress-report.pdf>

This page is intentionally left blank