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Unchecked Failures Leave Britain at Risk of More Crimes Like David Fuller's

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A damning independent inquiry has concluded that the horrific crimes of necrophiliac murderer David Fuller could happen again, owing to what it describes as dangerously inadequate oversight of mortuaries and funeral services in England.

Fuller, who is already serving a whole-life sentence for the sexually motivated killings of Wendy Knell and Caroline Pierce in Tunbridge Wells in 1987, was later found to have

abused at least 100 female corpses over 15 years while employed at hospital mortuaries. The fact that his actions went undetected for so long highlights failings described as "partial, ineffective and, in significant areas, completely absent".

Sir Jonathan Michael, who chairs the inquiry, issued a stark warning about the potential for similar offences. "I have asked myself whether there could be a recurrence of the appalling crimes committed by David Fuller. I have concluded that yes, it is entirely possible that such offences could be repeated, particularly in those sectors that lack any form of statutory regulation," he said.

In November 2023, the inquiry's first phase revealed that the Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust, Fuller's employer, suffered from systemic lapses. Among the most striking failures was the fact that Fuller accessed mortuaries 444 times in a single year, an activity that went completely "unnoticed and unchecked". The findings underscored a culture of complacency within hospital management that allowed such depravity to persist.

Sir Jonathan has since broadened the scope of the inquiry to examine practices across the funeral industry, describing it as "an unregulated free-for-all". In his interim review, he detailed incidents ranging from a funeral assistant photographing a person during embalming to bodies left decomposing under mouldy sheets and even an alleged sexual assault of a deceased woman by a funeral director in the 1990s.

He observed that, as the law stands, virtually anyone can set themselves up as a funeral director, operating from private premises without inspection or training requirements. "The system is fundamentally flawed," Sir Jonathan concluded. "There is no statutory framework to guarantee the security and dignity of the deceased."

He has called on the Government to introduce clear regulations to protect bereaved families and uphold public trust. While ministers have issued cautious statements acknowledging the recommendations, there remains no firm commitment to legislation, raising questions over whether lessons will be learned or whether these serious warnings will be ignored.

In a recent interview with BBC News, Sir Jonathan said: "The lack of action risks repeating the same grievous mistakes. Families have the right to expect respect and decency for their loved ones after death."