

Media statement on behalf of Rebecca Martyn, the Washington family and the Shepherd family

Patrick Maguire, partner at law firm HCC, represents Rebecca Martyn, Mother of Sophie and Wife of Lee, the Washington family and the Shepherd family.

Whilst today marks the end of this Inquest, it will never mark the end of the pain for all of our families and loved ones.

Nothing will ever bring back Sophie, Lee, Stephen and Kate.

On 12th August 2021 our lives were changed forever. Our hearts are still incredibly heavy with grief, and we are still struggling to come to terms with our loss.

We will never be able to understand or comprehend why Davison did what he did. It was an act of pure evil.

However, we now know that this evil act was facilitated and enabled by a series of failings and incompetence from the people and organisations that are supposed to keep us safe.

The system has hopelessly failed us. In particular, the Devon and Cornwall Police Force has failed us.

The evidence that we have heard during this Inquest, over the past 5 weeks, is a consistent story of individual failures, breath-taking incompetence and systemic failings within every level of the firearms licensing unit of the Devon and Cornwall Police Force.

It is beyond us how Davison, a man with a known history of violence, mental health issues, and with no real need to own a firearm, was granted a licence to possess a gun in the first place.

Davison then brutally battered two innocent children in an assault in the park. Davison's brutal attack was incorrectly categorized as a low-level assault.

Following this attack, his firearms license was revoked and his gun was seized.

Despite being charged with violently assaulting two innocent children, unbelievably, he was given his licence and gun back. Davison was considered a low risk by Devon and Cornwall Police.

The evidence that we have heard from Devon and Cornwall Police was that of a system that was a shambles from the top to the bottom. Those in charge of making decisions as to who should possess a gun, had no training on how to do the job. There was no supervision of those individuals. There was no auditing of the decisions that were being made.

There was a culture of granting people firearms licences against a background of serious concern. Davison's case was a prime example.

These systemic failings with Devon and Cornwall Police have failed to protect the public. They failed to protect our loved ones.

We firmly believe that these failings at Devon and Cornwall Police have resulted in the deaths of our loved ones. Warning signs were ignored and a license to kill was granted.

So far, there has been very little evidence of regret or remorse in the decisions, actions, omissions or catastrophic mistakes made by Devon & Cornwall Police, its Firearms and Explosives Licencing Unit, multiple other agencies, care services and individuals.

Senior Police officers have given evidence during this Inquest seeking to defend the indefensible. It has been extremely difficult for us to watch. It felt to us that Senior Officers from Devon and Cornwall Police closed ranks during this Inquest process.

It is too late for an apology from Devon and Cornwall Police. The time for that has passed. We want accountability, ownership and change.

We are grateful to the Jury and their findings. We thank them for the diligent and sensitive way they have conducted themselves during the court of this Inquest.

We now want seismic change and a complete overhaul of the firearms licensing system and legislation in England and Wales.

The current system and any perceived changes since this attack does not reassure us. It should not reassure the public.

During the next few weeks, we will be united in our commitment to making sure that fundamental changes are made to the way firearms are licenced in England and Wales.

We will work with our legal team and address the Coroner on our thoughts on how to prevent of future deaths.

We hope that change can come so no other family has to endure the torment of what we have been, and still are, going through.

We would like to thank all the people who have supported us during the worst time of our lives.

We would especially like to thank the local community and well-wishers who have made contact from all over the world. Their support and kind words have made a positive impact during a very difficult time.

We would also like to specifically thank Ian Arrow, Bridget Dolan KC for the sensitive way they have conducted this Inquest.

Finally, we have suffered intrusion into our lives on an unprecedented scale from complete strangers since the events of 12th August 2021.

We respectfully ask the media who are assembled here today, and those from afar, that we are left alone to digest and process the outcome of this Inquest

Thank you.

Additional written statement by Patrick Maguire to media:

Patrick Maguire, partner at law firm HCC, who is representing the families, said:

“There has been a huge amount of information for our clients to process during the Inquest over the past five weeks.

In the coming weeks we will work with our clients and provide the coroner with our client’s thoughts on how future deaths can be prevented.

Our clients are all united and are dedicated to ensuring that fundamental changes are made to prevent firearms getting into the hands of the wrong people.

Systems and Legislation needs to change. My team will now be supporting our clients in navigating the next steps to do our best to make these things happen.”

For further information, requests for interviews and other queries please contact – at any time:

Pete Davies (077779 033 016) – pete@sugarpr.co.uk who is handling the press office on behalf of Patrick Maguire and HCC.