Inquests and Inquiries
QEB Hollis Whiteman is a set of barristers offering advice and first class advocacy at every stage of the process in both inquests and inquiries. We represent bereaved families and other interested parties such as corporations and authorities, employees and professional individuals in inquests. In inquiries we provide representation both as counsel to the Inquiry and for core participants.

Recent Work

**Hillsborough Disaster Inquests**
Assisted the 2013 review into the Hillsborough Disaster of 1989.

**Stephen Lawrence Review**
Conducted the review into alleged police corruption.

**M5 Crash**
Acted at the inquest into the deaths of the 2011 M5 crash.

**Adam Johnston**
Acted at the inquest into a work related death involving 66 argon gas cylinders.

**Stockport Inquest**
Acted at an inquest into three deaths resulting from arson.

**Leveson Inquiry**
Advised the Public Inquiry that followed the News International phone hacking scandal.

**Dutton Inquiry**
Provided advice to the inquiry into the misuse of lottery funding.

**The Bloody Sunday Inquiry**
Provided advice to the "Bloody Sunday" Public Inquiry.

**Flt. Lt Sean Cunningham**
Acted at the inquest into the death of a Red Arrow Flt Lt.
Interested parties and core participants may find themselves vulnerable to criminal or regulatory investigation as well as civil proceedings as a consequence of the findings of an inquest or an inquiry. Our expertise in the overlapping areas of crime, police and professional discipline, health and safety and the military field enables us to protect and promote the interests of parties and participants as well as provide continuity of representation in any subsequent criminal or regulatory proceedings, should the need arise. Where appropriate we work closely with solicitors and experts acting in civil claims to ensure that the evidence adduced through an inquest is of substantial value.
Inquests and Inquiries

Inquests

QEB Hollis Whiteman have an experienced team who offer representation at all levels of seniority and advice at all stages of the inquest process. Early, and skilled involvement ensures that legal issues such as disclosure, representation, scope of the inquest, Article 2, contact with the Coroner, expert evidence and legal arguments are all dealt with in a timely fashion, all of which may have a significant impact on the course and outcome of inquest proceedings.

QEB Hollis Whiteman have appeared in many recent and significant inquest hearings following workplace deaths, unlawful killings and deaths in police custody. Members of Chambers have frequently been instrumental in persuading Coroners to widen the scope of an inquest to include Article 2 breaches.

Chambers have experience representing many different organisations including The Royal British Legion, various Police Authorities and medical organisations as well as individuals, families and dependants of the deceased.

The strong medical regulatory background of the regulatory team in Chambers puts them in a good position to assist in inquests where there are issues involving the quality of medical care.

QEB Hollis Whiteman are adept at adopting the right strategy at the hearing to assist the claim.

Recent cases

Hillsborough Disaster Inquests

Following an application by the Attorney-General in 2012 the High Court quashed the verdicts in the original inquests and ordered fresh inquests to be held. QEB Hollis Whiteman Chambers has assisted in the fresh review ahead of these new inquests into the deaths of 96 Liverpool fans at Hillsborough in 1989.

M5 Crash

Acted on behalf of a Firework Operator at the inquest into the deaths of seven people in a pile-up on the M5 in 2011 after becoming engulfed in thick fog. The learned Coroner ruled out firework smoke as the direct cause of the crash. The inquest resumed following a criminal prosecution alleging breaches of health and safety laws by the fireworks display organiser. QEB Hollis Whiteman secured the acquittal of the organiser with the Judge ruling that there was insufficient evidence.

Stockport Inquest

Represented a family member in an inquest into the deaths of three in a case of arson. The perpetrator broke into the home of his ex-lover and doused the building with petrol as the family slept before setting it alight. Three died and two survived. The circumstances surrounding events has led to criticism of health officials.

Flt. Lt Sean Cunningham

Represented the family of the Red Arrow Flt. Lt Sean Cunningham who had been ejected from his aircraft whilst it was still on the ground and his parachute failed to deploy. Properly interested parties included the MOD, the manufacturer of the ejection seat, BAE Systems, RAFAT personnel, the HSE and Lincolnshire Police. The inquest involved particularly complex evidence and an appreciation of industry specific technology.
Captain T Sawyer & Corporal D Winter
Represented the families of two soldiers killed in a friendly fire incident on operations in Afghanistan. They were struck by a Javelin anti-tank missile fired by British (Gurkha) troops operating under Danish command. This took place during a multi-national operation against the Taliban in Helmand, Afghanistan, in January 2009.

Brian Dorling
Represented an interested party into the death of a cyclist who was killed by a lorry whilst cycling on one of Boris Johnson’s first superhighways. The inquest required detailed consideration of the design, structure and operation of the cycle superhighway, hearing evidence from Transport for London and the police.

Lance Corporal David Wilson
Represented the family of Lance Corporal Wilson who died in 2008 as a result of a single gunshot wound to the head while on a military base in Iraq. He had been drinking and was three times over the drink drive limit. His family did not believe he deliberately shot himself, believing the cause to be horseplay or an accident. Following the three-day Inquest, the Coroner found that there was no evidence, even on a balance of probability that LCpl Wilson intended to take his own life.

Lt. Joshua Woodhouse
Represented the family of Lt. Joshua Woodhouse who died in a fall from height while serving aboard HMS Ocean, a Royal Navy Helicopter carrier, in port in the USA. The Coroner criticized the navy for "a culture of cutting corners" regarding health and safety on its warships and the death was considered entirely preventable.

Alan Long
Two Members of Chambers at QEB Hollis Whiteman acted for police officers in the inquest into the death of a motorcyclist following a police pursuit. Alan Long died in a road traffic collision while riding his motorcycle following a 44-minute pursuit involving 5 Greater Manchester Police vehicles and the force’s fixed wing aircraft on 1 August 2008. One member of chambers from QEB represented the interests of four police officers involved in the pursuit and another represented the interests of the pilot of the aircraft and observer. At the inquest the jury returned a verdict that Alan Long died as a result of an accident contributed to by his actions.

Mark Bates
Represented a machinery manufacturer at the inquest into the death of Mark Bates, a factory worker who was crushed to death as he operated a mechanical loader. The inquest centred on the deceased's competence at operating the equipment and whether he was certified to use it.

Anthony Cripps
Represented a landowner at the inquest into the death of a gardener crushed by a seven tonne mechanical digger while picking flowers at a Cotswold farm. The gardener was killed after falling out of a digger bucket, he was run over by the digger and suffered head and chest injuries.

Teresa Innes
Represented a junior hospital doctor in the inquest into the death of hospital patient Teresa Innes who was given IV penicillin whilst wearing a warning bracelet indicating her allergy to the drug. Teresa, a former care worker, suffered anaphylactic shock, causing brain damage which left her in a persistent vegetative state.
QEB Hollis Whiteman’s strength in advocacy and equal focus on regulatory and criminal law gives our members a keen appreciation of the risks and opportunities that involvement in a public inquiry can present for both organisations and individuals. Inquiries invariably involve complex, sensitive and controversial subject matter which counsel at QEB Hollis Whiteman are well placed to negotiate, offering advice and representation to anyone contemplating involvement as a core participant or as a witness giving oral evidence.

**Recent work includes:**

**Stephen Lawrence Review (2014)**

A senior member of Chambers conducted an independent Inquiry into potential police corruption and the role of undercover policing in the investigations into the murder of black teenager Stephen Lawrence which took place in 1993. Theresa May ordered a Public Inquiry into the work of undercover police officers following the review’s conclusions that Scotland Yard had planted "a spy in the Lawrence family camp" whose existence was previously concealed. A second review of successful prosecutions where investigations involved undercover officers was generated as a result of this review; QEB Hollis Whiteman has conduct of this review also.

**Mid Staffordshire Inquiry (2013)**

In June 2010 the Secretary of State for Health announced a full public inquiry into the serious failings in patient care at the Trust and why they were not identified and acted on sooner. The inquiry aimed to identify important lessons to be learnt for the future of patient care. On the 6th February 2013 the report of the Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust Public Inquiry was published identifying recommendations for improvements.

Three members of QEB Hollis Whiteman acted as leading and junior ‘Counsel to the Inquiry’ which began hearing oral evidence in November 2010. Seven junior members of Chambers assisted on the production of the resulting Francis Report.

The inquiry was praised for the efficiency with which it was run and the breadth and depth of the evidence examined.

The report has and continues to have wide reaching repercussions in healthcare reform.

**Leveson Inquiry (2011)**

The Leveson Inquiry was a Judicial Public Inquiry into the culture, practices and ethics of the British press following the News International phone hacking scandal. The review considered the role of the police and the press in the phone hacking scandal seeking recommendations to achieve better practice in relation to policy and regulation. Its aim was to safeguard press integrity and freedom whilst encouraging attainment of the very highest ethical standards.

Hearings began at the Royal Courts of Justice on 14th November 2011. Members of Chambers have provided advice to various parties involved in Part 1 of the Inquiry regarding the culture, practices and ethics of the British press following the scandal; Part 2 of the Inquiry has been deferred until after related criminal investigations and prosecutions have concluded.
**Dutton Inquiry (2010)**

Chambers provided advice and assistance to the Dutton Inquiry into allegations that £19.3million of Lottery funding was unlawfully paid from an account called the World Class Payments Bureau to individuals and organisations at the request of small governing bodies. Specific advice was provided on whether there was evidence of funds being misappropriated.

**The Bloody Sunday Inquiry**

The Bloody Sunday Inquiry was the independent Public Inquiry into the events of 30 January 1972 in Londonderry, Northern Ireland. Members of Chambers provided advice to and appeared in the Inquiry, specifically for the team acting for military witnesses.
"We are particularly grateful to William Boyce QC and Fraser Coxhill of QEB Hollis Whiteman for their tireless support, their particularly wise counsel and their superb representation throughout this traumatic process."

Ian Wilson, father and Mike Wilson, brother of Lance Corporal Wilson.

“I cannot thank you both enough for your work in the case of the inquest of Lance Corporal David Wilson, 9th Regiment Army Air Corps. I do not believe the result would have been the same had the family not been assisted by you.”

Kevin Hart, Solicitor, Royal British Legion

“It was a great pleasure to work with William [Boyce QC] and Fraser [Coxhill]. I really don’t think that the family will ever truly appreciate what they got in terms of William’s advocacy and Fraser's support. I have been doing this now for 22 years and have used a lot of Leaders. None have come anywhere close to what I experienced and learnt over the last few days!”

Mark McGhee, Partner, Fentons Solicitors LLP

“I have recently had the pleasure of working with Tom Kark QC & Polly Dyer on the Inquest touching the death of Flt. Lt Sean Cunningham. Counsel showed extensive knowledge of the subject matter throughout a very lengthy Article 2 Inquest. My clients found both Counsel very approachable and sympathetic to their situation. My clients would not have secured the verdict they did without the hard work and excellent advocacy shown by both Counsel. I would have no hesitation recommending both Counsel for Inquests especially where Article 2 is engaged.”

Keith Barrett, Partner, Irwin Mitchell LLP
“Chambers is renowned for its wide ranging skills and experience; most often for its strength in advocacy and advisory work. Clients are consistently reassured that chambers remains the number one choice in its respective fields.”

Chambers UK

“QEB Hollis Whiteman houses 'a huge number of very talented and bright barristers'.”

Legal 500

“The barristers at QEB Hollis Whiteman are ‘flexible and innovative, professional, approachable and highly efficient’.”

Chambers UK

“QEB Hollis Whiteman's panoply of silks and juniors gives it the bench strength to advise on the full range.”

Legal 500

“QEB Hollis Whiteman has extensive experience of dealing with a myriad of professional bodies, and in particular those in the healthcare, police and financial regulatory worlds. Clients choose from an array of barristers from QC to junior level, all uniquely skilled and adept at providing excellent, practical and tailored advice.”

Chambers UK

“QEB Hollis Whiteman fields a fine group of silks and juniors. ‘Their work-ethic, knowledge and expertise is just phenomenal,’ according to impressed sources, one of whom viewed the set as ‘the most down-to-earth chambers I’ve come across.’ Instructing solicitors receive a ‘user-friendly, accommodating, switched-on’ service.”

Chambers UK

“QEB Hollis Whiteman has ‘an incredible depth of experience to call upon’ with sources particularly impressed by the ‘excellent quality of its senior juniors.’ ‘They are simply a great set as they display great expertise and show real commitment’.”

Chambers UK
The Chief Coroner spoke to invited guests at QEB Hollis Whiteman Chambers on 19th March 2014.

He confirmed his commitment to the better training for Coroners and modernisation of the system. He spoke also about his intention to create a cadre of specialist Coroners.

He once again confirmed his commitment to place bereaved families at the heart of the system.

The statistics (England and Wales 2012):

- 499,326 deaths were registered.
- 227,721 deaths were reported to coroners.
- 32,542 inquests were opened.
- 26 weeks is the average time taken to process an inquest.
The barristers at QEB Hollis Whiteman are 'flexible and innovative, professional, approachable and highly efficient'

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