

SCOTTISH CHILD ABUSE INQUIRY PRIORITISES EVIDENCE FROM THE ELDERLY AND SERIOUSLY ILL

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The independent Inquiry set up to investigate the abuse of children in care in Scotland has today (Wednesday 10 February) introduced special measures to prioritise the testimonies of elderly or seriously ill people.

The announcement of the move came as the Chair of the Inquiry, Susan O'Brien QC, together with Panel Members Mr Glenn Houston and Professor Michael Lamb, announced that the Inquiry will now be known as the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry.

Ms O'Brien explained that both of these decisions had been taken after extensive engagement with a range of individuals and organisations with an interest in the work of the Inquiry. This engagement has been ongoing since the Inquiry formally began work on 1 October 2015.

Commenting, Ms O'Brien said: "We are not quite ready to issue a call to all survivors and witnesses to come forward, as we are arranging to put support in place for people who will find giving evidence upsetting.

"Unfortunately, not everyone can wait even a few more weeks, so we have decided to take evidence from a small number of survivors as a matter of urgency. We were asked to do this by INCAS, but there may be other witnesses in the same position. If they make contact with us we will try to take their evidence early.

On the decision to change the name of the Inquiry, Ms O'Brien added: "I have taken a decision to accept evidence of abuse which happened up until 17 December 2014.

"However you look at it, that is not a date far back in history, and I have concluded that the reference to "historical" child abuse is misleading. Anything which might prevent survivors of abuse from coming forward is not a good idea, and we can change the name without expense or difficulty at this early stage."

Those who wish to make contact with the Inquiry can do so either by email, information@childabuseinquiry.scot or post, Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry, PO Box 24085, Edinburgh, EH7 9EA.

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For further information, please contact 3x1 Public Relations on 0131 225 7700 / 0141 221 0707 or by email hmarston@3x1.com

Notes to editors:

The overall aim and purpose of the Inquiry is to raise public awareness of the abuse of children in care, particularly during the period covered by the Inquiry. It will provide an opportunity for public acknowledgement of the suffering of those children and a forum for validation of their experience and testimony. The Inquiry will do this by fulfilling its Terms of Reference which are set out below.

1. To investigate the nature and extent of abuse of children whilst in care in Scotland, during the relevant time frame

2. To consider the extent to which institutions and bodies with legal responsibility for the care of children failed in their duty to protect children in care in Scotland (or children whose care was arranged in Scotland) from abuse, and in particular to identify any systemic failures in fulfilling that duty
3. To create a national public record and commentary on abuse of children in care in Scotland during the relevant time frame
4. To examine how abuse affected and still affects these victims in the long term, and how in turn it affects their families
5. The Inquiry is to cover that period which is within living memory of any person who suffered such abuse, up until such date as the Chair may determine, and in any event not beyond 17 December 2014
6. To consider the extent to which failures by state or non-state institutions (including the courts) to protect children in care in Scotland from abuse have been addressed by changes to practice, policy or legislation, up until such date as the Chair may determine
7. To consider whether further changes in practice, policy or legislation are necessary in order to protect children in care in Scotland from such abuse in future
8. Within 4 years (or such other period as Ministers may provide) of the date of its establishment, to report to the Scottish Ministers on the above matters, and to make recommendations

Definitions:

1. Child' means a person under the age of 18
2. For the purpose of this Inquiry, "Children in Care" includes children in institutional residential care such as children's homes (including residential care provided by faith based groups); secure care units including List D schools; Borstals; Young Offenders' Institutions; places provided for Boarded Out children in the Highlands and Islands; state, private and independent Boarding Schools, including state funded school hostels; healthcare establishments providing long term care; and any similar establishments intended to provide children with long term residential care. The term also includes children in foster care
The term does not include: children living with their natural families; children living with members of their natural families, children living with adoptive families, children using sports and leisure clubs or attending faith based organisations on a day to day basis; hospitals and similar treatment centres attended on a short term basis; nursery and day-care; short term respite care for vulnerable children; schools, whether public or private, which did not have boarding facilities; police cells and similar holding centres which were intended to provide care temporarily or for the short term; or 16 and 17 year old children in the armed forces and accommodated by the relevant service.
3. "Abuse" for the purpose of this Inquiry is to be taken to mean primarily physical abuse and sexual abuse, with associated psychological and emotional abuse. The Inquiry will be

entitled to consider other forms of abuse at its discretion, including medical experimentation, spiritual abuse, unacceptable practices (such as deprivation of contact with siblings) and neglect, but these matters do not require to be examined individually or in isolation.

Support services for those affected by abuse in care:

In Care Survivors Service Scotland provides advice and support for those individuals affected by abuse whilst in care. It can be contacted on 0800 121 6027 or on www.incaresurvivors.org

Survivor Scotland has a directory of help and support services available locally and nationally, at www.survivorscotland.org.uk/help-and-support.

The Scottish Government is in the process of establishing a Survivor Support Fund. Further information about the Fund and when it will be launched can be found at www.gov.scot/historicalchildabuse.

The National Confidential Forum provides acknowledgement of the experiences of people who were in institutional care as children in Scotland. More information is available at www.nationalconfidentialforum.org.uk.