

SCOTTISH CHILD ABUSE INQUIRY LAUNCHES FORMAL CALL FOR EVIDENCE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 23 MARCH 2016

The Chair of the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry, Ms Susan O'Brien QC, has today (Wednesday 23 March) launched the Inquiry's first formal Call for Evidence, inviting survivors of abuse to come forward and share their experiences.

Ms O'Brien – together with other panel members Mr Glenn Houston and Professor Michael Lamb – made the announcement at an event held in Glasgow.

Those who suffered abuse as children in residential or foster care and who wish to provide evidence to the Inquiry are being asked to make contact by email, post or, from Tuesday 29 March, through a dedicated freephone number, 0800 0929 300.

Ms O'Brien also confirmed that survivors providing evidence in this way would become known as "applicants", with the first private evidence gathering meetings taking place from late April. The description "applicants" has been chosen because these are survivors who have applied to assist the Inquiry.

Applicants will initially have the opportunity to have their evidence heard in private and recorded anonymously by experienced and specially trained lawyers. There will also be public hearings and names can be public if applicants want them to. Rules providing for applications for anonymity have also been published on the Inquiry's website.

The Inquiry also confirmed that it expects public hearings to begin in November 2016, with the first looking at the current provision of psychological support for abuse survivors in Scotland.

Ms O'Brien said that she aims to provide an interim report on the first public hearings next year as that may enable the Inquiry to make recommendations that could improve the situation for survivors before publication of the Inquiry's final report. It is likely that interim reports will be published for subsequent public hearings.

The Chair also outlined the arrangements for providing legal support for applicants and those accused of abuse and announced that she intends to grant core participant status to some survivor groups provided that they meet certain criteria.

Ms O'Brien said that a key aspect of the Inquiry will be looking at recommendations for the future as well as learning the lessons of the past.

Launching the Call for Evidence, Ms O'Brien said: "Today the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry calls on survivors of abuse to step forward and be heard.

"I am asking survivors to help us, by telling us what happened to them. There is no immediate deadline for this- you can come forward months from now, if you like. We will always respect your dignity.

“The people who were abused are entitled to answers. Where lessons can be learned, we will make recommendations for the future. This Inquiry is not just for survivors of abuse in the past: it is also for some Scottish children yet to be born.”

Those who wish to make contact with the Inquiry can do so either by email, information@childabuseinquiry.scot, by post, Scottish Child Abuse inquiry, PO Box 24085, Edinburgh EH7 9EA or by telephone from 29 March onwards, 0800 0929 300.

ENDS

For media enquiries please contact:

3x1 Public Relations

T: 0131 225 7700 / 0141 221 0707

E: SCAI@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.