

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

PO Box 24202; Edinburgh EH3 1JN

e-mail: information@childabuseinquiry.scot

Message from Lady Smith

On 27 July I accepted appointment as the Chair of this critically important public inquiry. I come to this role with 15 years of experience as a judge of the Court of Session and High Court of Justiciary. I am personally committed to it and will discharge my duties independently, thoroughly and to the best of my ability.

This independent Inquiry was established in October 2015 for purposes which include the need to raise public awareness of the fact of children in residential care having been abused, to acknowledge and record the suffering of those children, to carry out investigations and to make recommendations.

It will investigate how children were failed, what went so badly wrong, identify what makes residential care safe for a child and make recommendations about what we consider is required to ensure that now, and in the future, the welfare of children is truly paramount and children are properly protected. My fellow panel member, Glenn Houston, and I are committed to delivering a thorough and conscientious response to its remit.

The Inquiry has commissioned research and has commenced the process of gathering information and documents from a range of institutions and organisations. It has published protocols and guidance – which you will find on this website - in relation to the ways in which it carries out its work.

I have issued restriction orders to protect anonymity where appropriate. A document management system provider has been appointed; that system will enable the documentary material that is ingathered and created by the Inquiry to be reviewed and analysed thoroughly and efficiently.

We are in the course of identifying and securing a suitable hearing venue and will also be appointing more members of the Inquiry team as its work is expanding. I hope to be able to provide more detail regarding our plans for investigations soon.

The terms of the remit were set when the Inquiry began. Their width enables us to investigate the abuse of children in residential care in Scotland (or arranged in Scotland) over a period from within the living memory of anyone who suffered such abuse up to the end of 2014.

The Inquiry will thus reach far back in time and has already gathered numerous accounts of abuse that happened many years ago. That work continues. It does so in private sessions which are taking place throughout the UK. We are determined to find out what happened, where, how and why, what was the conduct and what were the failings of institutions and others entrusted with the care and protection of children.

I would encourage anyone who is able to provide information about such abuse or about the places where it occurred or about those responsible for them, whether as victim, witness or otherwise, to come forward. Talk to us. We want to hear from you.

Lady Smith