

## **WORK OF HISTORICAL CHILD ABUSE INQUIRY BEGINS**

An independent inquiry into the historical abuse of children in care in Scotland has formally started work today (Thursday 1 October).

The Historical Child Abuse Inquiry will seek to raise public awareness of the abuse of children in care, provide an opportunity for public acknowledgement of their suffering and serve as a forum for validation of their experience.

The Inquiry - which will report to Scottish Ministers within four years (or such other period as Ministers may provide) - will cover the period within living memory of any person who suffered such abuse, up until such date as the Chair may determine, but no later than 17 December 2014.

A dedicated Inquiry website - [www.childabuseinquiry.scot](http://www.childabuseinquiry.scot) – has also gone live today to keep the public updated on the work of the Inquiry.

Inquiry Chair Susan O’Brien QC today undertook to give full details of the steps that the Inquiry will take, once the Inquiry panel members have been appointed by the Scottish Government.

During the start-up period, those who believe that they may have information to share are being asked to make initial contact with the Inquiry either by email, [information@childabuseinquiry.scot](mailto:information@childabuseinquiry.scot) or post, Historical Child Abuse Inquiry, PO Box 24085, Edinburgh, EH7 9EA. They should only send in their names and addresses at this stage, with one sentence about how they can help. As the inquiry operations and office are established, a phone number will also be introduced.

Organisations with records that may be of interest to the Inquiry are being asked to take the necessary steps to ensure that their records are preserved, to support the work of the Inquiry.

Commenting on the formal start of the Inquiry’s work, Ms O’Brien said: “Today is a significant first step in starting up the work of the Historical Child Abuse Inquiry. From the outset, I am keen to ensure that survivors know that we will listen carefully to their experiences, and that we will work hard to understand the lessons of the past in order to ensure that we keep our children safe in the future.”

Ms O’Brien added: “Once the Scottish Government has appointed the Inquiry panel members, and I have had a chance to discuss the issues with them, we will set out in detail the ways in which we will run the Inquiry and take evidence from witnesses. Counsel to the Inquiry will be in touch with survivors’ representatives during October to make sure that their views are considered before that happens.

“It would be helpful if all other interested parties made themselves known to the Inquiry now, so that their views can also be taken into account.”

The intention to establish a Historical Child Abuse Inquiry was announced by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, Angela Constance MSP, on 17 December 2014.

**ENDS**

For further information, please contact 3x1 Public Relations on 0131 225 7700 / 0141 221 0707 or by email [HCAIscot@3x1.com](mailto:HCAIscot@3x1.com)

**Notes to editors:**

Attached photo – Inquiry Chair Susan O’Brien QC

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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://www.nationalconfidentialforum.org.uk).