

CHILD PROTECTION IN RELIGIOUS ORGANISATIONS AND SETTINGS

An investigation into institutional responses to child sexual abuse and exploitation within the context of religious organisations and settings

April 2019 Explanatory Note

Introduction

1. Today, the Inquiry is announcing a new investigation into Child Protection in Religious Organisations and Settings and inviting applications for Core Participant status for this investigation.
2. This explanatory note accompanies the investigation's Definition of Scope document and should be read alongside it.
3. The Inquiry is currently conducting investigations into Child Sexual Abuse within the two largest religious organisations operating within England and Wales, the Anglican Church and the Roman Catholic Church.
4. In addition, the Inquiry now considers it necessary to examine the child protection policies, practices and procedures operating in other religious organisations. Many children attend religious services or activities run by religious organisations. This new investigation will enable the Inquiry to examine child protection in such settings.
5. This investigation will be thematic in nature and examine the nature and adequacy of current child protection policies, practices and procedures within religious organisations and settings within England and Wales. We will not be examining individual case studies, as the focus is upon organisational structures and child protection practices.

Definition of religious organisation or setting

6. For the purposes of this investigation, the Inquiry considers a religious setting or organisation to include:
 - a. Places where people gather to engage in collective rituals designed to bear witness or share collectively in their religious faith (e.g. mosques, temples, festivals); or
 - b. Places of tuition regarding one's faith tradition or cultural matters related to religious observance or faith, such as preparation for rites of passage (e.g. Jewish yeshivas and chedarim, Muslim madrassahs, Christian Sunday schools);
 - c. Places where children and young people gather in connection with their religious beliefs (e.g. youth groups, camps).

7. The Inquiry will focus upon those religious organisations with a significant presence within England and Wales, including but not limited to:
 - a. “Non conformist” Christian denominations;
 - b. Eastern and Coptic Orthodox communities;
 - c. Pentecostal churches and independent charismatic and house churches;
 - d. The Church of Latter Day Saints
 - e. The Jehovah’s witnesses.
 - f. Islam
 - g. Judaism
 - h. Hinduism
 - i. Jainism
 - j. Sikhism
 - k. Buddhism
 - l. Paganism

8. For the purposes of this investigation, the Inquiry will not examine teaching which takes place in full time schools run by religious organisations, whether funded by the state or independent, or tuition provided at home by parents pursuant to Section 7 of the Education Act 1996. It will also not examine voluntary youth provision which may take place in a religious setting but is not connected to it (i.e. youth groups using religious buildings but not associated with that religion).

Themes

9. This investigation will examine:
 - a. The management of child protection within religious organisations and settings, including;
 - i. Training, and the understanding of child sexual abuse;
 - ii. Policies and procedures;
 - iii. Vetting and barring and regulated activity as identified in the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012;
 - iv. Responses to allegations of child sexual abuse, including the provision of pastoral support to complainants, victims and survivors;
 - v. Internal processes for auditing, inspection or oversight of the child protection practices and procedures.

 - b. The existing statutory framework for the protection of children from abuse, and its application to religious organisations or settings.

 - c. The existing framework for auditing, inspection or oversight of the practices and procedures by either state or non state institutions.

- d. Whether there needs to be additional and/or different practices, processes or oversight (whether by way of internal oversight or external oversight by a non state or state body) to ensure that children are protected from child sexual abuse within religious organisations or settings.

Structure

10. Given its thematic nature, this investigation will not focus on any individual case studies or particular religious organisations. Instead it will look at whether there are common issues across religious organisations and settings and how they can be met and overcome.
11. The investigation will focus on obtaining evidence from institutions and individuals who are responsible for child protection within religious organisations, such as:
 - a. Those who work with children within a religious organisation or setting;
 - b. Organisations who provide training or services relating to child protection to religious organisations or those working with children within a religious setting;
 - c. Government Departments and agencies;
 - d. Non governmental and non profit making organisations or associations, such as charities, voluntary or community groups and co-operatives working with religious organisations or on their behalf.
 - e. Groups which work with, advocate on behalf of or represent, victims and survivors of sexual abuse within religious organisations and settings;
12. The Inquiry will have regard to the evidence already obtained about these issues in other investigations and will not seek to duplicate evidence already obtained in other investigations.
13. Recognising that the experience and needs of children of BAME communities and from diverse cultural backgrounds may not be reflected in currently available information, the Inquiry is particularly interested in encouraging participation from BAME communities, and those who work with women and girls.

Core Participants

14. The deadline for applications for Core Participant status in this investigation is 4pm on 13 June 2019. For the purpose of determining Core Participant applications, the matters to which the inquiry relates are those set out in paragraph 9 above.

Hearings

15. A preliminary hearing in relation to this investigation will take place at 14.00 on 23 July 2019.
16. The Inquiry will hold a public hearing in this investigation in 2020.