

Inquiry to hold UK's first virtual public hearing

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse will be the UK's first public inquiry to hear evidence in a virtual public hearing from 11-22 May, examining child protection in religious organisations and settings.

The original two week hearing was suspended after one day in March due to government advice regarding the Covid-19 pandemic.

Since then, the Inquiry has devised and tested a way of holding the hearing in a virtual setting, ensuring the health and safety of all involved.

The Chair of the Inquiry, Professor Alexis Jay OBE, considered the views of all core participants in the investigation before deciding to carry out the hearing using video conference technology.

As usual, proceedings will be streamed live on the Inquiry's website and YouTube channel. Witnesses will continue to be supported by the Inquiry's Support and Safeguarding team.

This hearing will examine child protection policies and safeguarding cultures in religious organisations in England and Wales. These include Jehovah's Witnesses, Baptists, Methodists, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, Hinduism, Buddhism and non-conformist Christian denominations.

The revised timetable for the first week will be published today (7 May) on the Inquiry website.

Professor Alexis Jay, Chair of the Inquiry, said:

"We have now found a way to continue our vital programme of public hearings while ensuring the health and safety of everyone involved during these challenging times.

"A huge amount of work has gone into making this virtual hearing possible and I want to thank all of the witnesses, legal teams, IT teams and Inquiry staff involved.

"The evidence heard will be crucial in helping us make findings and recommendations that can better protect children from sexual abuse."

Notes to editors:

- *The Inquiry is using Zoom technology to hold the hearing in a virtual setting.*
- *It is not possible to live stream the hearing with the usual three minute delay which means the Inquiry cannot live stream the evidence of anonymous witnesses.*
- *The transcripts will continue to be published at the end of each hearing day.*

- *The hearing will run for two weeks from 11-22 May and reconvene in August for one week.*