



INDEPENDENT INQUIRY CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Children in the care of Lambeth Council - One page summary

This investigation will examine the scale and nature of the sexual abuse experienced by children in the care of Lambeth Council over decades, as well as any institutional failures to protect those children. The public hearing will consider the failures of the past in order to evaluate how children in care can be kept safer and protected from sexual abuse in the future.

This hearing will take place in a virtual setting over four weeks from 29 June - 10 July and 20 July - 31 July. Witnesses include victims and survivors of child sexual abuse while in the care of Lambeth Council, former members of Lambeth Council, police officers and other public authorities.

The topics and issues to be considered are:

- The experience of children in care, including residential care, fostering and adoption;
- The culture at Lambeth Council over time, including the relationship between officers and councillors, and Lambeth's response to allegations of child sexual abuse;
- External inspection of Lambeth's Children Services, including the role of Ofsted and its current inspections;
- The response of the Metropolitan Police to allegations of child sexual abuse;
- The Crown Prosecution Service's prosecutorial decisions around child sexual abuse;
- Obtaining allegations and medical evidence from complainants of child sexual abuse.

The experiences of children in care will be central to this investigation, including the often distressing circumstances in which they were initially taken into residential care in Lambeth. Some came into care because of extreme neglect, abandonment, bereavement, or because they had endured painful physical violence or sexual abuse within the family setting. Others came into care because of housing problems or material conditions in the family home. All of them needed care and protection.

This investigation raises fundamental questions as to whether life was any better or, indeed, whether it was far worse for some children, after they came into Lambeth's care. It is clear that sexual abuse cannot be separated from other important themes which will emerge from the evidence, such as racism, fear, the anguish of separation from siblings, the paucity of leaving care provision and the lost opportunity to fulfil each child's promise.

In addition to evidence from victims and survivors of child sexual abuse, the Inquiry will consider five children's homes as case studies: Shirley Oaks, Angell Road, South Vale Assessment Centre, Ivy House and Monkton Street. These case studies have been selected to provide a focus for understanding the experiences of children in the care of Lambeth Council, to enable thematic issues to be considered which are indicative of the wider picture within Lambeth, or the culture operating within the Council over a period of time.