

Statement by the Chair of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse

27.11.2015

1. In my opening statement in July, I announced three parts to this Inquiry: the Truth Project; the Public Hearings Project; and the Research Project. Two weeks ago, I launched the Truth Project in Liverpool. Today, I am pleased to launch the Public Hearings Project by announcing the start of the Inquiry's investigative work.
2. Twelve investigations are proposed for this first phase. They will all begin with immediate effect and most, if not all, will culminate in public hearings. They represent only the start of the Inquiry's investigations and are by no means the total of the work we intend to conduct; further investigations will be announced as the Inquiry progresses.
3. The process of selecting these twelve areas of investigation has required a carefully targeted approach. The investigations will, I believe, enable us to build a broad picture of how institutions have failed to protect children from sexual abuse across all five workstreams of the Inquiry: that is, failures by local authorities; failures in the areas of criminal justice and law enforcement; in education and religion; in national and private service organisations; and in relation to alleged abuse by persons of public prominence. I am confident that this broad range of investigations will give a voice to victims and survivors who have experienced abuse in a variety of institutional settings or where there may have been institutional failings; and will combine consideration of non-recent allegations of abuse with urgent, contemporary issues of child protection.
4. There are two categories of investigation:
 - a. The first is institution-specific, involving inquiries into particular institutions or types of institution. In this category we plan to investigate failings to protect children in the care or supervision of Lambeth Council, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Councils, and Rochdale Council; we will investigate child sexual abuse in the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches; we will examine

the case of Medomsley Youth Detention Centre and consider the extent to which custodial institutions in general have failed to protect children from sexual abuse; and we will conduct a wide ranging investigation into sexual abuse in residential schools.

- b. The second category concerns a series of thematic investigations into broad areas of contemporary concern where multiple institutions may play a role in protecting children from abuse. In this category we will investigate child sexual abuse facilitated by the internet; we will build on the body of work already conducted into the sexual exploitation of children by organised networks; we will investigate the extent to which institutions in England and Wales are effectively discharging their responsibilities to protect children abroad; and we will consider the adequacy of existing services for providing support and reparations to victims and survivors. We will also conduct an overarching investigation into allegations of child sexual abuse by certain people of public prominence associated with Westminster.
5. By adopting both an institution-specific and a thematic approach, we will ensure that the Inquiry reaches its conclusions on as broad an evidence base as possible. By selecting cases from across the public and private institutional spectrum, we hope to reflect the wide range of institutions that may have enabled the sexual abuse of children to take place. We will not be limited to considering the particular institution that is the focus of the investigation, but will address the range of institutions responsible for child protection. And our recommendations will generally be made with the whole sector, rather than any specific institution, in mind.
 6. There is no doubt that the task we have set ourselves in the first phase is ambitious. To run twelve investigations in parallel represents an organisational challenge that is unprecedented in a public inquiry in the United Kingdom. We are determined to succeed and expect the full cooperation of all institutions and individuals who can assist us in our work.

Institution-specific investigations

7. Having set out, in headline terms, the twelve investigations we intend to conduct in our first phase, I will now provide more detail in respect of each one.

8. To start with the institution-specific investigations, we will conduct two separate inquiries into the sexual abuse of children under the care of local authorities: first, at Lambeth Council; and secondly at Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire Councils. Children living in care in residential homes or with foster carers are some of the most vulnerable children in society. The abuse of children in the care of Lambeth Council and Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Councils demands thorough and searching examinations of what may have taken place. The Inquiry intends to hear from victims and survivors of sexual abuse that happened whilst they were in the care of these councils, and to assess the extent to which a wide spectrum of public authorities in those areas failed to protect children.
9. Alongside the examination of Lambeth and Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire Councils we will conduct an investigation into the sexual abuse of children who lived in residential premises in a third local authority, Rochdale Borough Council. That investigation will be focused, in part, on allegations that boys who attended or resided at Cambridge House Boys' Hostel and Knowl View School were subject to sexual abuse by specific individuals, including by former Liberal Party MP Cyril Smith. A further important part of the investigation will be to consider the sexual exploitation of boys outside these residential premises. The primary purpose of the investigation is not therefore to focus on the criminality or otherwise of Cyril Smith, but to identify the extent to which institutional failings may have allowed the abuse of vulnerable children at Cambridge House, Knowl View and elsewhere within Rochdale to take place. In addition, the investigation (as well as those focused on Lambeth and Nottinghamshire) will allow the Inquiry to examine the extent to which children with special needs, disabilities or other vulnerabilities may have been at greater risk of sexual abuse and whether their vulnerabilities impacted upon any failure to take action to protect them.
10. Our fourth and fifth investigations will deal with failings by two major religious institutions in England and Wales, namely the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church. We will also be conducting research into child sexual abuse in other faith communities, which will lead to further investigations in time.
11. The sexual abuse of children within the Roman Catholic Church has been a matter of national and international concern for many years: the Archbishop of Westminster's calls for this Inquiry to be established reflected that concern. We will consider the extent to which the Nolan and Cumberlege reviews improved safeguarding and child

protection policy within the Church and we will examine whether policy is effectively implemented in practice. In conducting the investigation, we will identify specific case studies, the first being the English Benedictine Congregation which has been the subject of a number of investigations and inquiries into child sexual abuse at schools run by the Congregation. The Inquiry will examine the relationship between Orders such as the Benedictines and the Catholic Church in England and Wales and will consider how that relationship impacts on child protection. In this way the Inquiry will evaluate whether any failings identified within the English Benedictine Congregation, and within any other case studies identified as part of the investigation, are representative of wider failings within the Catholic Church.

12. Turning to the Anglican Church, I welcomed the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury for the Inquiry to investigate, as a matter of priority, the sexual abuse of children within the Church of England. Our investigation will assess the appropriateness of safeguarding and child protection policies and practices in the Church of England and the Church in Wales. We will consider the adequacy of the Past Cases Review of the Church of England and the Historic Cases Review of the Church in Wales. As a case study, we will consider the experience of the Diocese of Chichester, a Diocese that has been beset by allegations of sexual abuse, and subject to numerous investigations, reviews and inquiries. We will also consider the case of former Bishop of Lewes and subsequently Bishop of Gloucester, Peter Ball, and investigate whether there were inappropriate attempts by people of prominence to interfere in the criminal justice process after he was first accused of child sexual offences.

13. Sixth, we will investigate the sexual abuse of children in custodial institutions focusing, in particular, on the many hundreds of allegations of child sexual abuse at Medomsley Youth Detention Centre in County Durham. The apparent scale of abuse at Medomsley demands a rigorous inquiry into how such allegations, if true, could have gone uninvestigated and the offending undetected for so long. Our inquiry will pose probing questions of the secure estate for children and young people, the police and the criminal justice system. In addition to the Medomsley example, we will need to consider the extent to which other custodial institutions may have allowed similar abuse to take place.

14. In our seventh investigation we will investigate sexual abuse in residential schools. In the past five years, the number of criminal convictions for sexual abuse in schools

has surged and the Inquiry has already received many accounts of sexual abuse committed by teachers and school staff. We know that children who attend residential schools are especially vulnerable as a result of their isolation from their families and/or carers and the involvement of staff in their intimate pastoral care. For that reason, we have made residential schools the first focus of our education inquiry. We intend to investigate schools in both the state and independent sectors because children are vulnerable in residential settings regardless of the status of the school or the means of their parents. The same regulatory regime applies to all residential schools and many independent residential schools are inspected by Ofsted and Estyn, as well as by the Independent Schools Inspectorate. We recognise that sexual abuse has occurred in non-residential schools and, alongside our investigation, we will be commissioning research into child sexual abuse within the broader educational sector, including examining the experience of children with disabilities and special educational needs.

Thematic investigations

15. Turning to our thematic investigations, the Inquiry plans to investigate a number of urgent matters of contemporary importance.
16. First, we will investigate institutional responses to child sexual abuse facilitated by the Internet. No issue is more pressing for child protection. Developments in technology have brought new opportunities to offend against children. Some reflect patterns of offending which have existed for years: for example, the creation, possession and distribution of indecent images of children or the grooming of children for the purpose of abuse at a later time. Other opportunities to offend are new, including the use of online streaming as a means of abusing children who will often be abroad. The Inquiry will review national policies on preventing abuse facilitated by the internet, including the government's 'We Prevent' strategy, and will consider the appropriateness of the response of the National Crime Agency, its CEOP Command, and the police. We will investigate the policies of internet service providers, providers of online platforms, and other relevant software and communication technology companies relating to child sexual abuse, and consider the adequacy of the existing statutory and regulatory framework applicable to those organisations. Our objective is practical and forward-looking: we want to make

recommendations that minimise opportunities for children to be sexually abused through use of the internet.

17. Secondly, we will investigate child sexual exploitation by organised networks. The systematic grooming and sexual abuse of children by groups of offenders in cities and towns of England and Wales is widespread. Building upon the body of work on child sexual exploitation following specific instances in places such as Devon and Cornwall, Oxford, Rochdale, Rotherham, and Telford, the investigation will assess the extent to which the wide range of relevant authorities have learned lessons, implemented recommendations, and put in place effective strategies to prevent child sexual exploitation in future. We will consider, for instance, whether the police and other agencies are using civil prevention orders effectively; whether the current regulation of the night-time economy and taxi licensing is effective in protecting children from abuse; and whether the criminal justice system is providing appropriate treatment and support to victims and survivors of child sexual exploitation.
18. Thirdly, we will investigate the extent to which organisations in England and Wales have satisfied their duty to protect children abroad. In recent years, grave allegations have emerged regarding child sexual abuse by individuals working for British institutions and organisations abroad. Our investigation will look at institutions based in England and Wales which recruit people to work abroad, including the Armed Forces, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the British Council and private companies and voluntary organisations. It will examine the extent to which such institutions have failed adequately to protect children abroad by, for example, employing individuals who should not work with children. We will investigate how effectively the United Kingdom justice system is equipped to address the potential for abuse abroad by those known to authorities in England and Wales as posing a risk to children. And we will consider the adequacy of Whitehall responses to reports of institutional failures to protect children from sexual abuse in overseas territories.
19. Fourthly, we will conduct an objective fact-finding inquiry into allegations of abuse by people of public prominence associated with Westminster. The investigation will focus on high profile allegations of child sexual abuse involving current or former Members of Parliament, senior civil servants, government advisers, and members of the intelligence and security agencies. It will consider allegations of cover-up and

conspiracy and will review the adequacy of law enforcement responses to these allegations.

20. Finally, we will investigate the extent to which existing services and legal remedies available to victims and survivors of child sexual abuse effectively deliver reparations for the harm they have suffered. This investigation is unique within the first phase of our work insofar as it focuses on the aftermath of abuse rather than its prevention. It responds to multiple reports from victims and survivors of inadequate support services, obstructive insurance companies and a civil justice system that may fail to deliver genuine reparation. We will also examine the adequacy of other compensation schemes including awards made following conviction in criminal proceedings and awards by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority. Amongst the case studies in this investigation, we will examine the experience of victims and survivors of sexual abuse at Forde Park Approved School and at care homes in North Wales. We will examine the extent to which current mechanisms for support and compensation help or hinder the delivery of the right to truth, accountability, compensation, and guarantees of non-recurrence and we will consider recommendations for reform.

21. Alongside these twelve investigations that form the first phase of the Public Hearings Project, we plan to hold a series of expert hearings into questions of public policy which will feed into the recommendations we make. We propose to start, in the first half of 2016, with an expert hearing into the risks and benefits of mandatory reporting. We will also hold a hearing to explore the balance which must be struck between encouraging the reporting of child sexual abuse and protecting the rights of the accused.

Procedure and timing

22. The Inquiry has today published on our website documents defining in more detail the scope and focus of each of the twelve investigations.

23. I cannot give a fixed timescale for the completion of all of this work, but it is reasonable to assume that while some of the investigations may be completed within eighteen months, others may take several years to conclude. In some cases, overlapping criminal proceedings may cause substantial delay to the progress of individual investigations. Nonetheless, in my Opening Statement I committed to

completing the work of the Inquiry within five years and my current assessment is that that timeframe, whilst ambitious, is achievable.

24. With that in mind, the Inquiry will be publishing on its website, by the New Year, procedural timetables in relation to each of the investigations that I have announced today. Each investigation has its own webpage and procedural announcements will be made via the relevant page. We anticipate that applications for those who wish to be designated as core participants will open in relation to some of the investigations before the end of the year, with preliminary hearings commencing in February 2016 to consider those applications and any subsequent applications for funding. Directions for disclosure of evidence and - where applicable - general calls for evidence from members of the public may also be considered at these preliminary hearings which will be announced on our website.

Update on the wider Inquiry

25. I would now like to update you on the progress of other elements of the Inquiry. I am delighted that both the Research Project and the Truth Project are underway.

26. With regard to the Research Project, a full research strategy has been developed, with research questions identified to support the Inquiry workstreams. A review of existing evidence has started to identify gaps in knowledge about child sexual abuse within institutions and to support the investigations I have just announced. The Inquiry will also undertake or commission research into the sexual abuse of children within public and private health facilities, the sexual abuse of children with special needs, and the impact of the media on perceptions of victims and perpetrators of child sexual abuse. The academic advisory board maintains quality control and ethical oversight of the developing research activities. Full details of the Inquiry's research priorities will be published on the website at the beginning of December.

27. Turning to the Truth Project, I was pleased to launch the Truth Project pilot in Liverpool two weeks ago. We have been hearing from victims and survivors of child sexual abuse in the first private sessions and have heard from people who were abused in schools, in children's homes, in religious organisations and in other institutional settings. I am immensely grateful for the bravery shown by each and every person who chose to share their experience with us as part of the pilot.

28. These pilot sessions will help us to establish the full Truth Project, which will begin next year. I have no doubt that it will shine a light on the scale and patterns of child sexual abuse in England and Wales. It will allow victims and survivors of abuse to contribute to the work of the Inquiry and help us to gain a better understanding of why many crimes went unreported and undetected for so long. We will publish, in anonymised form, summaries of the accounts we receive and everyone who shares their experience with us will have a chance to leave a message for publication alongside our reports.
29. To those who have suffered as a child because any organisation within England or Wales has failed in its duty to protect you from sexual abuse, we want to hear from you. We are setting up regional offices to ensure that no one need travel too far to see us; and anyone may share their experience with us in writing if they would prefer. The first office opens in Liverpool in April 2016. Offices in Cardiff and Darlington will be open by May 2016. An office covering the South West region will also open by May 2016; an office in the Midlands will open by Summer 2016; and an office for London and the South East will be open by Autumn 2016.
30. Alongside the Truth Project, the Victims and Survivors Consultative Panel (VSCP) ensures that voices of victims and survivors remain at the heart of the Inquiry's work. The VSCP Terms of Reference were published on the Inquiry website on 1 October 2015. I want to thank the VSCP for their advice and work, including most recently on the setup of the Truth Project.
31. We continue to develop and improve the Inquiry's website which can be accessed through the new domain name www.iicsa.org.uk. We have made regular publications on the website about our work and will continue to do so. We have now published a series of videos from the Chair and Panel to explain the work of the Inquiry and to help ensure our commitment to transparency and accessibility.
32. In September, a fault with the Inquiry's website meant that some data sent to us by victims and survivors of abuse was never received. I recognise how serious this situation was. The loss of this data was not identified soon enough and this is not acceptable. I want to apologise personally to any individual whose information was not received by the Inquiry. Given the seriousness of the situation, I directed that a leading external IT firm was engaged to carry out a full review of the robustness of

our website. I am satisfied on the basis of the external review that we have a robust system and I want to reassure all victims and survivors that your data is safe.

33. The Inquiry is today publishing a business update on its website which contains further, more detailed information on the Inquiry's engagement with victims and survivors and its operational management.

Conclusion

34. The scale of child sexual abuse in this country requires urgent and careful attention. The report of the Children's Commissioner for England, published this week, suggests that around 400,000 - 450,000 children were sexually abused in England between 2012 and 2014, but only around one in eight of those children were ever identified by statutory agencies. These shocking figures resonate with accounts we have received from victims and survivors and with published research which shows that many children suffer in silence without support or understanding from those institutions charged with their protection.
35. Over the next twelve months, the Inquiry will be maintaining close contact with the Office of the Children's Commissioner for England as it proceeds with the second phase of its inquiry into sexual abuse in the family environment. We will be looking closely at emerging evidence showing unsatisfactory levels of coordination between statutory bodies concerned with child protection. And we will follow the response of the government's inter-departmental Child Protection Task Force.
36. The Inquiry has been a long time in the making. I took up my position as Chair of this statutory inquiry in April of this year. I said from the start that the Inquiry would take time, and we have spent six months working hard to prepare for the long journey ahead. I am pleased to say that today all parts of the Inquiry - the Truth Project, the Public Hearings Project, and the Research Project - are now launched. I look forward to the cooperation of all institutions and individuals who can provide assistance in our urgent and vital work.