

Witness Name: David Mellen
Statement No: two
Exhibits:
Dated: 4th September 2018

THE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Witness Statement of David Mellen

I, David Mellen, will say as follows:-

1. I make this witness statement in response to a letter dated 8th August 2018, from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) requesting a further written statement under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006.
2. The letter sets out a number of specific questions, all of which relate to the minutes of the Safeguarding Assurance Forum that took place on 14 February 2018 (NCC003688)
3. The Safeguarding Assurance Forum was established in 2013 to provide scrutiny of the effectiveness of the City's interventions. It is chaired by the Corporate Director of Children's Services. The attendees include me, the Independent chair of Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board, the Director of Children's Integrated Services and the Safeguarding Board Team. Colleagues from other agencies are invited as appropriate. The forum offers further scrutiny of services for children, young people and their families. The Safeguarding Assurance Forum is one of the mechanisms through which I scrutinise local safeguarding arrangements. It does not have the remit to challenge Council policy or our position in relation to issues such as that outlined above. That said my recollection is that the position that apologies should be issued personally to survivors received broad support.
4. The Inquiry has asked me about the minutes of a meeting in which comments were made by the Leader of the Council in relation to historical abuse. In that meeting, it was commented that the Council would apologise when there was something to apologise for. I am pleased that the Inquiry has asked me to clarify the Leader's comments, as I recognise that this statement could be misunderstood. In so far as the statement may be interpreted as meaning that the Leader's stance is that the Council has nothing to apologise for, that is not the Leader's position, not my position and not what I intended to convey when I used those words.
5. The Council's position is that a distinction should be drawn between public and private apologies. The Council believes that both forms of apology serve important but distinct purposes. A private apology, made directly to a victim, has the advantage

of being able to address specifically the victim's particular circumstances and gives the victim the opportunity to raise with the Council their particular concerns. A public apology will inevitably be in more general terms but will involve an open acceptance and public recognition that children in the care of the Council suffered harm that should have been avoided.

6. The Council has made private apologies to victims of sexual abuse. The Leader has personally met with survivors and their supporters, along with the Corporate Director for Children and Adults and apologised to them for the abuse they experienced. I have also met with a victim of historical sexual abuse. Her child is in the care of the City council and she raised a concern with me about his educational needs and how these were being met at that point. We also discussed a range of other issues, including her account of her abuse whilst in care as a child. I did not apologise, as an apology did not seem to me to be what she was seeking at that point. I did however follow up the issues she raised with me and subsequently wrote to her to confirm the outcome of this.
7. The primary vehicle for public communication about allegations of historical child abuse is a webpage dedicated to this issue. This is available via the following link <http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/children-and-families/child-abuse-prevention/allegations-of-historical-child-abuse-in-nottinghamshire/>
8. The webpage makes clear that the council recognises that children's homes should be a place of safety, and harm of any kind is a dreadful and damaging abuse of duty and trust, which we take extremely seriously. It also confirms that the City Council will not shy away from historical abuse allegations and is committed to bringing perpetrators to justice and ensuring professional standards are upheld. The same webpage provides information for survivors of abuse and signposts to other sources of information, including the IICSA website.
9. Additionally, in autumn 2014, the Leader addressed the issue of historical abuse in a column that he wrote in the Nottingham Arrow, which is a free paper distributed to each household in the City. In that article, he set out the position of the City Council as indicated in paragraph 8 above. In the article, the Leader encouraged anyone aware of, or affected by, historical abuse to come forward.
10. The position that Council officers would meet personally with survivors to offer support and apologise to them, rather than issuing a public apology, was discussed in the Leadership Group meetings. It was supported by Executive Councillors. I am a member of the Executive and so was involved in the decision taken in relation to this matter. I too believe that any apology issued must be meaningful and genuine. The position with regard to a wider, non-specific public apology has been subject to ongoing consideration.

The Council has not yet made a public apology. The position adopted by the Council to date has been that any public apology it makes must be genuine and meaningful. If such an apology is to be made it must involve an acceptance that some children in the care of the Council were subjected to sexual abuse and a recognition that such abuse occurred when the Council was responsible for the welfare of the victims. The

Council is acutely aware that victims of abuse often (rightly) consider a partial or caveated apology to be worse than no apology at all.

11. To that end, the Council has been analysing the documentary material that it has been asked to supply to IICSA, and the documentary material and witness evidence it has received from other core participants, with a view to assessing the nature and extent of abuse suffered by children who were in its care. This process is ongoing, but as a result of its analysis so far the Council has reached the clear view that a public apology is appropriate and should be made. When the terms have been finalised the apology will be published on the Council's website and will take into account the issues we have identified ourselves and those issues highlighted through the work of the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed: _____

DPA

Dated: _____

5/9/18

DPA