

Introductory Forum Events Summary

Background

Introductory events were designed following a consultation of Forum members in March 2018. The events were an opportunity to learn about the work of the Inquiry and to meet other members of the Forum.

Each event delivered five short presentations on the following subjects:

- Overview and Terms and Reference of the Inquiry;
- Investigations and the Inquiry's legal work;
- The Truth Project;
- Research;
- Victims and Survivors Consultative Panel (VSCP).

An open discussion followed the presentations.

The Inquiry held introductory Forum events in London, Cardiff, Exeter, Darlington and Liverpool.

We received questions from Forum members throughout and have pulled together the broad themes in this summary note. The suggestions and comments will be fed back to the Senior Management Team at the Inquiry for consideration.

The Inquiry's remit

Members asked whether childhood sexual abuse in a familial setting would be considered by the Inquiry.

The Inquiry is governed by its Terms of Reference and considers the extent to which state and non-state institutions have failed in their duty of care to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation; to consider the extent to which those failings have since been addressed; to identify further action needed to address any failings identified; to consider the steps which it is necessary for institutions to take in order to protect children from such abuse in future; and to publish a report with recommendations.

Victims and survivors who have been abused in a familial setting can come forward and share their experiences with the Truth Project. The Inquiry is keen to hear from victims and survivors who have reported child sexual abuse to any



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persons in an institution, such as teachers, social workers, police or other authorities. This includes experiences of a child displaying signs of abuse that institutions failed to recognise.

Final report and end date

Members asked when the Inquiry will end and when the final report and recommendations will be published.

The Inquiry has already published and made recommendations in Interim Report and in some investigation reports which can be found on the Inquiry's website.

The Inquiry previously announced that it expects public hearings to conclude by the end of 2020. Investigation reports will continue to be published after this, as well as the Inquiry's final report. The final report will contain a set of recommendations from the Chair and Panel, drawing on all three strands of the Inquiry's work: public hearings, research and the Truth Project. A date for the publication of the final report has not yet been set.

Investigations and the Inquiry's legal work

Members wanted to know how evidence is obtained by the Inquiry.

As a statutory inquiry, the Inquiry has a unique authority to compel both witnesses and institutions to produce any material necessary in order to investigate where children have been let down in the past. Evidence is likely to be taken from both representatives of the institutions under investigation and from victims and survivors of child sexual abuse.

Concerns were raised about the court process, with some Forum members suggesting it should be reviewed. Some members commented that the court process can result in re-traumatisation and a setback for victims and survivors. Members wanted to know if the Inquiry will be making recommendations around the criminal and civil justice systems.

The Inquiry has held three weeks of public hearings in its Accountability & Reparations investigation, examining the legal processes available to victims and survivors of child sexual abuse. Recommendations about the criminal and civil justice systems may also be made in the Inquiry's final report.

Seminars have also been held on the civil justice system, the criminal justice system and criminal injuries compensation.



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Concerns were raised about the length of time the Inquiry spends on some investigations compared to others. Some attendees suggested the investigation reports should have accompanying summary papers. The Panel choose the number of hearing days bearing in mind a range of factors, including the complexity of the issues they need to examine and the Inquiry's overall work programme. Core participants have an opportunity to make suggestions about which witnesses are called to give evidence and what topics are covered.

The investigations enable the Inquiry to understand how institutions have failed to protect children from sexual abuse and provide evidence to make practical recommendations to ensure better institutional protection for children in the future. Each report is accompanied by an executive summary and a news release on the Inquiry's website.

The Truth Project

Forum members received a short overview of the Truth Project. Members wanted to know more about how Truth Project information is used to support the Inquiry. Concerns were raised that the Truth Project doesn't provide feedback following sessions, particularly around individual cases and recommendations. Some participants felt that feedback could help victims and survivors complete this part of their journey.

Victims and survivors are fully supported throughout their engagement with the Truth Project. Throughout the process, victims and survivors are informed of how their information is used and offered opportunities to opt out if they so wish. Victims and survivors should be assured that although the Inquiry will not directly feed back on individual cases or recommendations, the experiences shared will contribute to the Inquiry's recommendations and findings.

The information the Inquiry receives about child sexual abuse, including the information provided to us in Truth sessions, will be used to inform the recommendations of the Chair and Panel to help protect children and keep them safer in the future.

The information given by Truth Project participants is not tested, challenged or contradicted. It is anonymised and will be considered by the Chair and Panel when reaching their conclusions and making recommendations for the future. It may also be used for research reports and to produce a summary of their experience to be published online.



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The Inquiry passes all allegations of child sexual abuse to the police and is required to do so by law. The Inquiry will only pass on the personal details of a Truth Project participant if they want us to, or, unless we believe there is a child protection concern or someone is at risk of serious harm.

Members asked how the Inquiry would encourage more victims and survivors to come forward and share their experiences.

The Inquiry is running an awareness-raising campaign, to ensure as many victims and survivors of child sexual abuse as possible are aware of the Truth Project. The campaign has used TV, radio, press and engagement at a local and national level with key stakeholders to raise awareness of the Truth Project.

Members asked if the information passed to Operation Hydrant is pieced together to strengthen ongoing cases. To date, every single police force in England and Wales has received a referral from the Inquiry, and 60 percent of those have involved a “live safeguarding risk”. Operation Hydrant receives 135 referrals a month on average from the Inquiry, which had resulted in 14 convictions by the end of 2018.

Research

Attendees were given a presentation covering the work strands of the research team.

The research looking at perpetrators of child sexual exploitation in organised networks prompted discussion and divided opinion. Some members were unsure why research was being done with perpetrators and others felt it was crucial that the Inquiry do this. The Inquiry wants to better understand how to prevent and disrupt perpetrators. To get the fullest possible understanding, we need to consider a wide range of perspectives, including speaking to perpetrators directly. The findings from the research will contribute to the Child Sexual Exploitation by Organised Networks investigation.

VSCP

The role of the Victims and Survivors Consultative Panel (VSCP) and their input into the various work across the Inquiry was explained. Attendees at the events asked how the VSCP was recruited and what plans they had during the remaining time of the Inquiry.



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Forum members asked about BAME representation. The Inquiry is currently considering its engagement activity to ensure it hears from a diverse range of people from different backgrounds. We are also looking into how we can increase BAME membership in the Forum.

How can the Forum work with the Inquiry

Working with the Inquiry

Some Forum members offered to be advocates for the Inquiry by raising awareness of the Truth Project and wanted to help promote culture change in their local areas.

Members requested information about how the Inquiry uses its social media channels to share information about the Inquiry and the Truth Project.

Future of the Forum

Forum members asked about the future of the Forum when the Inquiry concludes and wanted to consider what its legacy should be.

The Forum team has recently published the 2019 events programme. This has been designed using Forum members feedback and suggestions. Members felt that Forum events should be meaningful and subject-focused. The events schedule provides an opportunity for members to share their views and experiences on policy subjects in three areas. These include *The Criminal Justice System, Culture and Access to Records*. It also provides members with an opportunity to join live-streamed events to learn and ask questions about six research areas.

The format of events was discussed at all of the introductory events. Members felt it was important that events are safe and contained. Members also felt that every member who attends an event should have an equal opportunity to participate. Considering this feedback, we will continue to hold events for up to 30 members at each event.

Members also asked for other methods of engagement and communication to be in place for those who cannot attend a face to face event. The Inquiry will now be providing members with an option to contribute by completing an online form instead of attending an event in person. The form will pose the same questions that will be provided to members at face to face events. The Inquiry is also continuing live-streamed events, which members will be able to join remotely.



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Other suggestions made by Forum members included:

- Meeting in their regions throughout the year
- Making Forum events more survivor-led