

Victim and Survivors Forum - Manchester - 23 March 2017

Thank you to those who attended the Victim and Survivors' Forum held in Manchester on 23 March 2017.

We are grateful to those who attended and took the time to contribute comments and feedback on the work of the Inquiry. We are currently considering the many comments and suggestions we received on the day. We have already taken action in relation to some of the suggestions received.

The following paragraphs set out what was discussed.

Agenda

Following feedback at the Forum event held in London the previous week, the meeting agenda was revised. To help maximise the time for discussion and feedback, the presentations were reduced significantly in length and the slides circulated to participants in advance. The agenda for the day was as follows:

- 11:10 Presentation 1: Update on the work of the Inquiry, including the Review

- 11:20 Table discussion about the new programme of work set out in the Internal Review, and on any other issues which Forum attendees wish to discuss

- 12:15 Lunch

- 13:15 Presentation 2: Inquiry seminars in 2017/18

- 13:25 Table discussion, including consideration of the consultation included in the Internal Review, which invited suggestions for the issues to be covered in Inquiry seminars in 2018.

- 14:20 Round up, opportunity for Q&A and summary of the day

We have attached the slides presented on the day as an Annex to this report.

Introduction and Overview of the day

Robbie Kent, Deputy Secretary to the Inquiry, opened the event by welcoming all attendees and provided an overview of the programme for the day. As usual for Forum events, support workers were at the event and available to provide advice or support to anyone who wanted it.

Robbie Kent apologised on behalf of the Inquiry for the recent accidental disclosure of the email addresses of Victim and Survivors Forum members.

Concerns were raised by participants about the fact that email addresses continued to circulate and Robbie Kent asked those at the event to not recirculate the email addresses as it was causing concern to some.

Suggestions were raised about a potential online forum being set up which would allow forum members to communicate with each other outside of the Forum events. Participants felt that it should be optional for Forum members to participate within the online forum.

Presentation 1: Update on the work of the Inquiry, including the Review, Public hearings, Seminars and the Truth Project.

Inquiry Panel member, Dru Sharpling gave a presentation which provided an update on the work of the Inquiry. This covered current and future public hearings and seminars in addition to updates on the Truth Project.

The below feedback was provided on the recent seminars and public hearings that have taken place. This was similar to that received at the previous Forum event that took place in London.

- The language did not reflect what victim and survivors wanted to say;
- Participants want to feel included in the seminars and public hearings and want to have more input;
- Issues papers need to be produced in plain English with less legal terminology used, and Forum participants should be able to make contributions to these.

Participants felt it was unclear if the Inquiry seminars and public hearings were open to the public or to core participants only - it was explained that these are public events and that anyone can attend. A request was made for this to be made clearer on the Inquiry website and in future presentations. Further feedback was also provided on how victims and survivors should be able to get involved in the Inquiry's seminar

programme, such as:

- Simplified versions of issues papers to be created that can be discussed at a Victim and Survivors Forum, in advance of the seminar taking place.
- Invite a group of victims and survivors to draft an issues paper for further discussion at a seminar.
- Questionnaires to be circulated via support groups so that they can encourage a wider group of victims and survivors to contribute their views.

The Truth Project

Several suggestions were raised in relation to raising awareness of the Truth Project. These included:

- The creation of Inquiry pin badges, alongside the Inquiry's existing materials, which could be worn to generate conversation and recognition of the Inquiry within the victim and survivor community;
- Advertise the Truth Project in magazines, on social media platforms and more broadly in public areas such as public toilets, shopping centres and bus stops.

The Inquiry acknowledged that there is more work to be done to raise awareness of the Truth Project and outlined that marketing and communications efforts are currently underway to raise awareness.

A series of paid-for articles are appearing in women's weekly and lifestyle magazines from late March until early June. The campaign is designed to introduce the Truth Project and aims to provide information to raise consideration to participate amongst victims and survivors. It also informs the wider public, especially those who know victims and survivors.

A [Facebook page](#) was set up at the beginning of April to communicate the work of the Inquiry and to encourage more people to share their experiences via the Truth Project. Please note that to view the Inquiry's Facebook page you will need to log in.

It was suggested that the Truth Project anonymised summaries should be given back to the relevant victim and survivor to read once they had been written up. Participants felt that the summaries had been simplified and glossed over some of the issues too much, and that the Inquiry should give those involved an option of giving informed consent not to be anonymous so their truth can be heard.

Questions were also raised in relation to the support that is in place for the participants once they have taken part in the Truth Project. Forum members feel there are gaps in specialist support for victims and survivors. Participants acknowledged that follow up phone calls are made after sessions, but that this is not enough. A suggestion was

raised about having a voucher system in place to assist with the funding for counseling services, and for more signposting to support services to be provided.

Communication

A clear message to the Inquiry was that the general communication to Forum members and other victims and survivors needs to be improved. The below suggestions were provided:

- A newsletter should be created and circulated to Forum members as a form of regular communication.
- Forum telephone line and voicemail to be set up which will allow Forum members to contact the Inquiry and leave a message, instead of contacting the Inquiry via the Information line.
- Hard copies of documents such as the Inquiry Review to be sent to Forum participants in the post.
- Have a single named point of contact instead of contacting specific teams in the Inquiry.

It was explained that a promise to introduce a regular Inquiry newsletter had been made at the London event the previous week. The newsletter is currently in development.

Future Forum Events

Participants felt that future Forum events need to be restructured to allow more time for discussions and the opportunity to provide more suggestions and feedback on the Inquiry. Participants also felt that they would like have more involvement in the subjects due to be discussed on the day.

The below feedback was also provided on how Forum events could be improved.

- Events need to be longer;
- Less talking from the front and more from the Forum members;
- Workshop events to be created to allow opportunity for further debates and more open discussion;
- Seminar type events to allow a safe space for whistleblowers, in addition to Forum participants and events.

In response to the feedback that has been provided, the Inquiry is now reviewing the structure of the Forum with regard to future events.

Suggested areas for further examination

Concerns were raised about the exclusion of familial abuse from the scope of the Inquiry, and it was suggested that the family should be classed as an institution. It was explained that the Inquiry's Terms of Reference are set by the Home Secretary and that familial abuse was not excluded where an institutional failure was also apparent. The following areas were also raised as subjects for further investigation:

- Disclosure;
- Human rights;
- Youth Offending teams;
- Residential institutions;
- The Police, including cover ups
- All Church types;
- Education including lack of education for children in the care system;
- Mental and physical health;
- Cultural;
- Female Genital Mutilation;
- Whistleblowers.

Thank you

We remain extremely grateful for the input and participation of all members of the Victims and Survivors Forum. Your views are highly valued and help inform our work. We look forward to seeing you again at future Forum events.

This note, together with the slides that were presented on the day, will be published on the Inquiry website.

