

Update – 8 October 2020

Call for Evidence

The Chair has recently launched a public advertising campaign to make a further call for witnesses to come forward and give evidence to the Inquiry. The advertising is being run on social media and in several public locations in and around Telford. Witnesses are being asked to get in touch with the Inquiry to provide any relevant information. As mentioned in the last progress report, individuals should not assume that the Chair will contact them - in some cases, that would not be appropriate, particularly where this involves victims/survivors; in other cases, the Inquiry may not have contact details, and even where we do, we may not be able to use the details because of data protection rules. For these reasons, if you have evidence to give, please do come forward.

The Inquiry is progressing, and this is likely to be the Chair's final public request for evidence, so if you do have any information to give to the Inquiry please get in touch as soon as possible. The Chair can then ensure your evidence is considered, taken into account, and used to direct further enquiries.

Independent Inquiry
Telford Child Sexual Exploitation

Get in touch
Bring about change
The Inquiry wants to
hear from You

CONTACT US

Further information about the Inquiry can be found on our website.

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mail@iitcse.com

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base 25

For independent witness support by Base 25 call:
01902 572 040 or
07495 266 899
or text 07800 002 222

Witnesses

The Inquiry has had contact with 114 potential witnesses and met 49 of them, with further interviews arranged for the coming weeks and witnesses being followed up and encouraged to give evidence, as appropriate. The Chair is particularly keen to hear from survivors, their families, and those who worked in child safeguarding and protection, and the Inquiry continues to rely on its key stakeholders to encourage their employees, past and present, to speak to us.

Experts

The Chair is pleased to announce that he is in the process of appointing two individuals to provide expert evidence to assist him with his work. One of the individuals is an expert in social work and will assist the Chair when examining whether social work practices, approach and structures reflected published guidance and contemporary practice relevant at the time; the other is an expert in policing, and will be assisting the Chair in relation to the relevant national policing policies and practice that applied at the relevant time, how this was interpreted and complied with, and whether the police response was appropriate and proportionate. The formalities of these appointments are still being finalised but as soon as they have been confirmed, the Chair will make a further announcement and will provide details of the experts.

Disclosure

Documents continue to be disclosed by stakeholders in response to general and specific requests for documents made by the Chair. To date, the Inquiry has received approximately 158,290 documents / 1,001,153 pages in total, which are potentially relevant to its Terms of Reference, broken down as follows:

- The documentation received from the Council to date amounts to approximately 150,691 documents / 923,301 pages of material that is potentially relevant to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference.
- The documentation received from West Mercia Police to date amounts to approximately 5,866 documents / 56,811 pages of material that is potentially relevant to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference.
- The documentation received from other stakeholders, including relevant NHS provider organisations, Telford & Wrekin Clinical Commissioning Group, West Midlands Police and NHS England amounts to approximately 1,733 documents / 21,041 pages.

The Inquiry continues to work through and analyse this material to help inform its investigations. That analysis does lead to further requests for documents and evidence being made by the Chair, and that process is likely to continue for several months.

Covid-19

The Covid-19 public health crisis continues to have an impact on the Inquiry's work. While the Inquiry has adapted its working arrangements and continues to predominantly take witness evidence via secure video or telephone conference, the pandemic has impacted many of those stakeholders who are providing documents, information and evidence to the Inquiry. In particular, this impact has been felt in the following ways:

- Access to hard copy material is more practically difficult for all stakeholders due to restrictions around access to premises, ensuring they are Covid secure and a limit on attendees. Therefore, access to paper documents has taken longer for stakeholders to arrange than might be the case in ordinary times.
- Many of the key stakeholders remain on the front line of the response to the pandemic. It follows that people who might have spoken to us over the last month or so have been extremely busy in their primary roles, and that time which might have been spent organising disclosure of documents to us has, understandably, been diverted to supporting the community and prioritising those most in need. As a result, the disclosure process has taken longer than otherwise might have been the case and we have seen fewer institutional witnesses than we had hoped by this stage of the process.

The Inquiry however remains in constant contact with the key stakeholders, and the disclosure of documents and the process of obtaining witness evidence is continuing. We have interviewed witnesses remotely and in person, in Covid secure locations – properly socially distanced - during the pandemic.

In addition to the inevitable impact of Covid-19 on the Inquiry's timescales, the sheer volume of material already received is greater than the Chair had originally anticipated – and more is to come. This takes time to sift and distil. As a result, the Chair has already discussed revised timescales with the Survivors' Committee and with Telford & Wrekin Council and hopes to announce a revised indicative timetable for publication in the next update, following consideration of the extent of disclosure and witness engagement in the interim.

CONTACT THE INQUIRY

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