

# The Herald 23/02/2017

## Child abuse inquiry panel decision defended by John Swinney

Deputy First Minister John Swinney has defended his decision to leave a major inquiry into child abuse in care in [Scotland](#) with just one panel member.

Glenn Houston resigned from the Scottish child abuse inquiry panel this week to avoid any potential conflict of interest after he accepted two other public appointments.

He is the third original panel member to resign from the inquiry after Susan O'Brien QC quit following claims she had made comments that were "offensive" to survivors while professor Michael Lamb stepped down after saying the review is "doomed" due to interference by ministers.

Senior judge Lady Smith replaced Ms O'Brien and will now lead the inquiry on her own.

Mr Swinney told [Holyrood](#) the [Government](#) is "committed" to bringing justice and accountability for abuse survivors after former Scottish [Labour](#) leader Johann Lamont questioned him on the survivors' concerns regarding the inquiry's progress.

Ms Lamont said: "There are concerns that none of the original panel now remain in position and that the support for survivors in the process is excluding those with proven expertise and understanding of the experience of survivors."

She asked Mr Swinney how he would address the concerns and "sustain confidence in the inquiry".

He said he understood that survivors find the latest panel change "unsettling".

Mr Swinney added: "I assure Johann Lamont, parliament and survivors that the appointment of Lady Smith to lead the inquiry was a decision taken by me after consultation with survivors to try and build that confidence that I acknowledge to be so essential to the duration to the inquiry."

He continued: "I give Johann Lamont and parliament the assurance that government is absolutely committed to ensuring that the inquiry has the resources and the capacity to address the remit that has been designed for it, and to bring justice and accountability in an area where justice and accountability should have been delivered a long time ago."

Lady Smith said earlier this month she was examining 69 institutions following survivors coming forward with evidence of historical allegations of child abuse in care.

The inquiry covers the period within memory of anyone who has suffered abuse, not beyond December 2014. Public hearings will begin on May 31.