

# Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

PO Box 24085; Edinburgh EH7 9EA

e-mail: [information@childabuseinquiry.scot](mailto:information@childabuseinquiry.scot)

## A Brief Guide to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

### Introduction to us

The **Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry** is an independent public inquiry investigating the abuse of children in care in Scotland. It began its work on 1 October 2015.

The Inquiry has been set up by the Scottish Government under legislation. The Inquiry has certain powers which can include requiring organisations to give evidence to help the Inquiry carry out its investigations.

Being **independent** means we are not part of the Scottish Government or any other organisation like the National Confidential Forum. We do not take sides with any organisations.

This Inquiry has the power to examine the actions of everyone who was responsible for the care of children in care, and the prosecution authorities and the police.

### What our work covers

This Inquiry can only look at matters within its **Terms of Reference**. The Terms are attached to this guide. The Terms were written by the Scottish Ministers. We cannot investigate or hear evidence about things which are not covered by the Terms. For example, this means we cannot consider evidence about abuse of children who were not living in care at the time, or evidence about the abuse of adults.

We can investigate abuse which took place in an **institution** like a borstal, List D school or a Young Offenders' Institution. The abuse could have taken place in **children's homes**, schools with **residential** facilities, **foster care** or in places for **Boarded Out** children. The Inquiry can also consider evidence about abuse of children in care which took place **in another country** if the care had been arranged in Scotland.

The **time of abuse** could be abuse which happened any time in living memory up to 17 December 2014.

**Abuse** means, in most cases, physical or sexual abuse.

### The Inquiry Team

The Inquiry is run by a team of people. The **Chair** of this Inquiry is Susan O'Brien QC. She has assistance from Professor Michael Lamb and Glenn Houston. Together they form the **Panel** who will hear and consider the evidence.

The Inquiry has lawyers who are known as **Counsel to the Inquiry** and **Solicitors to the Inquiry**. They identify witnesses and bring together the evidence for the Inquiry Panel to consider.

The **Inquiry Secretary** and her staff deal with the day-to-day running of the Inquiry including providing support to witnesses and everyone else involved.

### **How we do our work**

The Inquiry will do its work in stages.

At first, we will have a lot of initial **investigations** to carry out. This work includes identifying and speaking to witnesses. We will also need to get hold of and look at relevant documents.

The Inquiry will then hold formal **hearings** in a special venue where lawyers, witnesses and the public can come along, and evidence is heard. But a public inquiry is not like a court because no one can be found guilty of a crime and compensation can't be awarded.

All the evidence will be considered carefully and the Inquiry will publish a **report** with the Panel's recommendations about how to protect child in care from abuse in the future. The report must be considered by the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament.

### **How you can help**

If you want to, you can speak to the Inquiry about your experiences as a child in care. After speaking to you, we will prepare a written record of your evidence. This is called a **witness statement** and records what you remember about what happened to you or what you saw. Our guidance called "**Interim Interview Arrangements**" gives more information about how giving a statement works.

### **More information**

Our **website** ([www.childabuseinquiry.scot](http://www.childabuseinquiry.scot)) has a lot of information about what the Inquiry is doing and how it works. If you don't have access to a computer, we can **post** you any information you need. You can **write to us** at PO Box 24085, Edinburgh EH7 9EA .