

NEWS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE USE

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“A move in the right direction” – Commission welcomes Scottish Government action on national inquiry into historic abuse

The Scottish Human Rights Commission has welcomed the Scottish Government’s commitment to taking action on a national inquiry into historic child abuse, as part of a package of measures to implement an Action Plan for Justice for Victims of Historic Abuse.

Responding to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning’s statement to Parliament today, Professor Alan Miller, Chair of the Commission said,

“The Cabinet Secretary’s commitment today is a move in the right direction. The state has a duty to protect people from abuse and to fulfil their rights to justice and remedies. In our view, a national inquiry is an important mechanism for providing accountability for past abuses, learning lessons from the past and preventing future abuses.

“The Commission welcomes the Scottish Government’s commitment to taking forward many elements of the Action Plan that has been developed through an InterAction process over the past two years. We look forward to the question of a national inquiry being resolved in full discussion with survivors of abuse.”

The Scottish Government has asked the Commission to hold an urgent recall meeting of the InterAction group to address a range of questions around holding a national inquiry.

Professor Miller continued,

“Following today’s request, the Commission will do all it can to help the Scottish Government reach a final decision about holding a national inquiry. This is a crucial

issue for many survivors and one that must come to a conclusion as soon as practically possible. We will work with others to bring the InterAction group back together at the earliest opportunity to explore the matters raised by the Cabinet Secretary.”

Noting the Cabinet Secretary’s recognition of the value of the InterAction process, Professor Miller said,

“The Commission welcomes the Scottish Government’s recognition of the value of the InterAction process, based on a human rights framework, that has led to the development of an Action Plan for Justice for Victims of Historic Abuse. We hope to see this approach become more commonplace as a way of putting people whose rights are affected by issues, at the heart of decision-making and action planning processes by Government and public bodies.”

Ends

Notes to Editors

1. The InterAction process is a facilitated negotiation between survivors and a wide range of those with responsibilities or interest in securing justice for victims of child abuse. 75 people have been involved in 3 formal InterAction events, with more involved in mini-interactions and open events.
2. The InterAction process has run for nearly two years and has involved three full InterAction meetings in February and June 2013, and October 2014. It has been overseen by a review group which contains survivors, representatives of institutions, Government, public bodies and others. Three open events for survivors of abuse, as well as a consultation on a draft Action Plan, have also taken place to enable wider participation and review of progress by those directly affected by the issues being considered through the InterAction.
3. The process has been constructed based on human rights principles outlined in SHRC’s Human Rights Framework for Acknowledgement and Accountability for Historic Child Abuse, published in 2010. It is facilitated by the Scottish Human Rights Commission and CELCIS (the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland).