

## **Update - InterAction meeting on historic abuse**

**Date: 8 March 2013**

**On Thursday 28 February the Scottish Human Rights Commission and CELCIS (Centre of Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland, University of Strathclyde) hosted an InterAction event in Glasgow.**

The aim of the InterAction, the first facilitated negotiation within a human rights framework in Scotland, was to bring people and organisations to the same table at the same time to develop a plan to deliver justice for victims/survivors of historic abuse.

This meeting brought together victims/survivors of historic child abuse, Scottish Government Minister Michael Matheson and officials, and representatives of local authorities, institutions which provided residential child care, workers associations, foster care organisations, the Bishops Conference, the Conference of the Religious, and a number of religious orders. The event was chaired by Professor Dr Monica McWilliams, an expert in transitional justice and one of the architects of the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland, and was supported by staff and the Chair of the Scottish Human Rights Commission, Professor Alan Miller along with Commissioner Shelagh McCall.

The InterAction took place in a spirit of mutual respect and constructive engagement. All sides recognised that, whilst some steps have been taken to address historic abuse, victims/survivors have waited many decades for acknowledgement and accountability for the trauma they suffered as children. Many participants underlined the severe and enduring impact this has had on them, as well as on their family and friends.

This first meeting of the InterAction process agreed a platform for further negotiations in areas related to:

empowerment of victims/survivors to access justice, including support services

experience sharing between institutions and public bodies on steps which they can take to respond through remedies such as apologies and compensation

acknowledgement of harm such as through effective apologies

accountability of all of those who held responsibilities for the care of children and learning lessons for current and future child care practice.

Specific areas that will be further discussed include the possibility of establishing a national reparations fund, possible changes to the civil law time bar, and the value of introducing an "Apology Law" which would enable all institutions to make full and effective apologies.

The February meeting was a first step with a second InterAction planned for later in the year to take these points forward in an 'Action Plan' that will then be open to public consultation.

Professor Dr Monica McWilliams, the Chair of the InterAction said:

“The first InterAction meeting was a breakthrough in bringing together victims and survivors, managers of institutions, providers of services in children's homes, the Scottish Government, local authorities, church leaders and religious orders to talk to each other and, importantly, to listen to each other. I was really encouraged by the positive engagement and courage from all sides to take part in this important exchange. The areas agreed for further negotiation represent a useful step towards achieving justice in this challenging area.”

Professor Alan Miller, Chair of the Scottish Human Rights Commission said:

“Last week’s meeting was an important step for Scotland in addressing the continued denial of justice to survivors of historic child abuse and their families. The Commission will be looking now to all sides to continue the spirit of constructive engagement and develop an action plan that delivers real change in a way that works for everyone.”

Recognising the high level of public and media interest in the InterAction, there will be regular and transparent communication about the ongoing process with participants in the InterAction as well as to the general public. There will be opportunities to respond to the public consultation towards the end of 2013.

**If you or someone you know has been affected by historic abuse you can contact [www.survivorscotland.org.uk](http://www.survivorscotland.org.uk) for information and advice.**