

Press Release

Issued: 13 January 2015

In today's edition of the Belfast Telegraph there are a number of matters referred to in articles relating to the approach of the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry to allegations relating to Kincora.

In the normal way the HIA Inquiry does not comment on media reports on its work, but in view of the exceptional level of public interest in matters relating to Kincora the Chairman wishes to respond to inaccurate reports and dispel any consequent misunderstanding about the Inquiry's approach to investigating Kincora.

At present the HIA Inquiry awaits a decision by the Northern Ireland Assembly to the request made by the Inquiry in April 2014 for a further year to be allowed for it to complete its work. It understands that the necessary statutory order to allow this is being considered by the Assembly.

Until an extension is granted, the HIA Inquiry is limited in the amount of forward planning it can do to complete its work. Nevertheless it continues to plan its programme for the remainder of its investigations, and one of these matters is how it will carry out its investigations into Kincora.

Following the statements of 21 October 2014 by the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Inquiry has been engaged in discussions with HM Government about a number of matters that have to be resolved before the Inquiry can carry forward any investigations into non-devolved bodies as part of its existing plans to investigate allegations about the way children were treated in Kincora .

1. The Inquiry has sought details of all files relating to Kincora held by all UK Government departments and agencies, and has requested that these be provided by 30 January, 2015.
2. The Inquiry will require a senior civil servant to confirm to the Inquiry at a suitable time that all relevant files have been produced or accounted for.
3. HM Government have agreed in principle to cover the additional costs that the Inquiry will incur in investigating the non-devolved UK Government departments and agencies that the Inquiry may have to investigate.
4. Following discussions between the Inquiry and the Attorney General for England and Wales, on 7 January 2015 the Attorney General wrote to the Chairman providing an undertaking in the usual form about immunity for witnesses who co-operate with the Inquiry, and in that undertaking he says "For the avoidance of doubt, I can confirm that the undertaking covers any allegation of an offence arising under the Official Secrets Act." In due course the letter will be placed on the Inquiry website alongside the existing undertaking from the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland.

HIA Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry

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5. Other administrative steps that have to be put in place to enable the Inquiry to carry out a full investigation into these matters are underway.

In the newspaper article there are several quotations from a letter written by the Inquiry solicitor to Colin Wallace's solicitor on 19 December 2014. The Inquiry will not normally comment on its correspondence, particularly with possible witnesses. However, as only some parts of this letter have been placed in the public domain the Inquiry wishes to point out that the article omits the last sentence of that letter where the Inquiry solicitor said "It may be some time before the matters are resolved, but once they are we will contact you further to make arrangements for Mr Wallace to be interviewed".

When the Inquiry is in a position to discuss with Mr Wallace matters that are relevant to its work it will do so. Contrary to what is said in the same article none of the other individuals who are quoted as having offered to come forward have approached the Inquiry whether directly or indirectly, and the Inquiry will be in touch with them when it is ready to do so.

In the meantime the Inquiry will continue with its public hearings into other institutions.

ENDS