

## Press Release

# Inquiry to focus on systemic failings involving Father Brendan Smyth

Issued: 19<sup>th</sup> June 2015

***Note: pool facility filming and photography arrangements are in place and we have issued details of those separately.***

**For suggested use from 00.01 hours on Monday, 22<sup>nd</sup> June, but no embargo**

**All media requests for information should be directed to the Inquiry's Press Officer, Liz Fawcett, on 028 9020 0811 or 0771 943 5662, or at [liz@lizfawcettconsulting.com](mailto:liz@lizfawcettconsulting.com)**

The Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry will commence its sixth thematic module of public hearings with an Opening Hearing at **10.00 hours (BST), Monday, 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2015 at Banbridge Courthouse, Banbridge, Co. Down, Northern Ireland.**

Module 6 will focus on issues arising from the sexual abuse of children by Father Brendan Smyth in a number of children's homes in Northern Ireland. The abuse has been described by a number of witnesses who have previously given evidence to the Inquiry.

The module will therefore concentrate on an examination of what opportunities there were to prevent Smyth carrying out the abuse of children and the Inquiry panel will consider whether any steps taken, or not taken, to deal with Smyth amount to systemic failings.

The proceedings will commence with a brief opening address from the Inquiry's Chairman, Sir Anthony Hart. After this, Counsel to the Inquiry, Joseph Aiken, will provide a detailed opening of matters relating to Father Smyth. The subsequent oral evidence will concentrate on the opportunities to prevent Smyth's abuse.

Module 6 is expected to last for a week.

The Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry was formally established in January 2013 by the Northern Ireland Executive. It has a remit to investigate child abuse which occurred in residential institutions in Northern Ireland over a 73-year period from 1922 to 1995.

In total, the Inquiry is expected to hear from more than 300 witnesses during the course of the public evidence sessions.

# HIA Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry

HIA INQUIRY, PO BOX 2080, BELFAST, BT1 9QA, NORTHERN IRELAND  
T: 028 90 720600 E: GENERAL@HIAINQUIRY.ORG W: WWW.HIAINQUIRY.ORG

Under the Inquiry's revised Terms of Reference, the Inquiry is required to complete its hearings and all investigative work by mid-summer 2016, and has to submit its report to the Northern Ireland Executive by 17<sup>th</sup> January 2017.

Applications to participate in the Statutory Inquiry and Acknowledgement Forum are now closed. By the closing date, 524 individuals (excluding duplicate applications) had made a formal application to speak to the Inquiry and/or its Acknowledgement Forum. Most of the applications (330) have come from individuals residing in Northern Ireland. The Inquiry's Acknowledgement Forum has now completed its interviews and met with 428 applicants.

A total of 16 institutions in Northern Ireland are currently under investigation by the Inquiry in relation to allegations of historical institutional abuse and/or neglect. In due course, the Inquiry may decide to investigate other institutions.

The Inquiry's Chairman, Sir Anthony Hart, is a retired senior High Court judge who practised in Northern Ireland. The other members of the Inquiry are Geraldine Doherty, who was formerly the Head of the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work in Scotland, and David Lane, who was formerly Director of Social Services in Wakefield, West Yorkshire, England.

The Inquiry's hearings are open to the public. Details of forthcoming proceedings will be posted regularly on the Inquiry's website: [www.hiainquiry.org](http://www.hiainquiry.org)

ENDS

## Notes to Editors

1. The Opening Hearing to the public evidence sessions for Module 6 will take place commencing **at 10.00 hours BST on Monday, 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2015 in Banbridge Courthouse, Victoria St., Banbridge, Co. Down, BT32 3DH, Northern Ireland.** We would ask all media to be seated by **9.50 hours.**
2. The Inquiry has issued a **Media Protocol** and **three** legally-binding **Restriction Orders** of relevance to the media. **It is essential that all editors, journalists, photographers and camera crews involved in covering the Inquiry's public evidence sessions read these documents,** a copy of which is also displayed in the media room in Banbridge Courthouse.
3. Opening Remarks by the Chairman and Counsel will not be released in advance.
4. In Banbridge Courthouse, each witness is accompanied by a witness support officer from their arrival until they leave. A trained counsellor provided by Contact NI is also on site and available to everyone in attendance.

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5. Following an inter-departmental task force report, the Northern Ireland Executive, on 29 September 2011, announced there would be an Investigation and Inquiry into historical institutional abuse.
6. On 31 May 2012, the First Minister and deputy First Minister announced the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry, and advised the Assembly of the Chair of the Inquiry and of the Panel Members for the Acknowledgement Forum.
7. An amended terms of reference to widen the scope of the Inquiry from 1922 - 1995 was announced by the First Minister and deputy First Minister on 18 October 2012. See <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/news-ofmdfm-191012-ministers-widen-historical>
8. On 12 June 2012, the Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse Bill and the associated Explanatory and Financial Memorandum were laid before the Assembly. The Bill passed through a number of stages and, on 11 December 2012, the 'Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse Bill' was passed by the Assembly. Following Royal Assent, the Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 became law on 19 January 2013. The Inquiry is formally established under this Act.
9. Sir Anthony met with Ministers in the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister in April 2014 to seek an extension of one year to the date by which the Inquiry must submit its report. This was subsequently granted in January 2015 and, therefore, under its amended Terms of Reference, the Inquiry is required to complete its hearings and all investigative work by mid-summer 2016, and has to submit its report to the Northern Ireland Executive by 17 January 2017.
10. The Inquiry has a remit to investigate physical, emotional and sexual childhood abuse, and childhood neglect which occurred in residential institutions in Northern Ireland over a 73-year period up to 1995.
11. For the purposes of this Inquiry "child" means any person under 18 years of age; "institution" means anybody, society or organisation with responsibility for the care, health or welfare of children in Northern Ireland, other than a school (but including a training school or borstal) which, during the relevant period, provided residential accommodation and took decisions about and made provision for the day to day care of children; "relevant period" means the period between 1922 and 1995 (both years inclusive).
12. It should be noted that the Inquiry has been tasked with examining whether there were institutional failings in respect of historical abuse and neglect. The Inquiry has no legal power to find anyone guilty of criminal acts.
13. The Inquiry is chaired by Sir Anthony Hart, assisted by Panel members Geraldine Doherty and David Lane. Acknowledgement Forum Panel members are: Beverley Clarke, Norah Gibbons, Dave Marshall QPM and Tom Shaw CBE. Biographical details for these individuals, Senior and Junior Counsel to the Inquiry, and other members of the Inquiry team are available on the Inquiry website: [www.hiainquiry.org](http://www.hiainquiry.org)
14. The institutions currently under investigation by the Inquiry in relation to alleged historical institutional abuse and/or neglect are as follows (in due course, the Inquiry may decide to investigate other institutions):

## Local Authority Homes

CHAIRMAN: SIR ANTHONY HART SECRETARY: ANDREW BROWNE

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- Lissie Children's Unit, Lisburn
- Kincora Boys' Home, Belfast
- Bawnmore Children's Home, Newtownabbey
- Fort James Children's Home, Derry/Londonderry
- Harberton House Assessment Centre, Derry/Londonderry

## **Juvenile Justice Institutions**

- St Patrick's Training School, Belfast
- Lisnevin Training School, County Down
- Rathgael Training School, Bangor
- Hydebank Wood Young Offenders' Centre, Belfast

## **Secular Voluntary Homes**

- Barnardo's Sharonmore Project, Newtownabbey
- Barnardo's Macedon, Newtownabbey

## **Roman Catholic Voluntary Homes**

- St Joseph's Home, Termonbacca, Derry/Londonderry
- Nazareth House Children's Home, Bishop St., Derry/Londonderry
- Nazareth House Children's Home, Belfast
- Nazareth Lodge Children's Home, Belfast
- De La Salle Boys' Home, Rubane House, Kircubbin

15. Further background information on the Inquiry is contained in a background briefing paper which includes practical arrangements for the media and is available from the Inquiry's Press Officer. Further information is also available on the Inquiry's website.

16. **All media requests for information should be directed to the Inquiry's Press Officer, Liz Fawcett, on 028 9020 0811 or 0771 943 5662, or at [liz@lizfawcettconsulting.com](mailto:liz@lizfawcettconsulting.com)**