

Press Release

Opening Hearing – public evidence sessions

Issued: 10th January, 2014

For suggested use from 00.01 hours (GMT), Monday 13th January 2014 (no embargo)

Media accreditation and pool filming/photography arrangements are in place for the Opening Hearing. Please refer to the Editors' Notes for more details.

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

The Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry will commence its public evidence sessions with an Opening Hearing at **2pm (GMT), 13th January 2014 at Banbridge Courthouse, Banbridge, Co. Down, Northern Ireland.**

Proceedings will begin with a short opening address from the Inquiry's Chairman, Sir Anthony Hart. This will be followed by an opening address from Senior Counsel to the Inquiry, Christine Smith QC. She will provide a general overview of the structure of the Inquiry, and the issues and questions which it will be addressing.

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 up to 1995.

The Inquiry is expected to hear from more than 300 witnesses during the course of the public evidence sessions. The majority of these will give evidence in person, although some may give their evidence in the form of a written statement. However, in some instances, a live video-link will be used.

The public hearings are expected to continue until June 2015.

434 individuals have made a formal application to speak to the Inquiry and/or its Acknowledgement Forum. Most of the applications (280) have come from individuals residing in Northern Ireland. However, there have also been 61 applications from Australia, 63 applications from Great Britain, 20 applications from the Republic of Ireland and 8 from other countries. (2 applications were incomplete).

The Inquiry's Acknowledgement Forum has now met with 263 applicants.

Applications to participate in the Statutory Inquiry are now closed. However, potential witnesses can still apply to speak to the Acknowledgement Forum if they wish. It will continue its work in parallel with that of the Statutory Inquiry.

A total of 13 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.

It is anticipated that the Inquiry's public hearings will continue on **Tuesday, 14th and Wednesday, 15th January**, commencing at **10.30am** on each day. Senior Counsel to the Inquiry, Christine Smith QC, will continue to deliver her opening address during those two days. After she has concluded, legal representatives for any of the core participants who wish to deliver a short opening address will be given the opportunity to do so.

The Inquiry's hearings will then resume at **10.30am on Monday, 27th January**, with the commencement of the Inquiry's first thematic module of evidence. This will focus on the following former institutions, both of which were run by the Sisters of Nazareth:

- St Joseph's Home, Termonbacca, Derry/Londonderry
- Nazareth House Children's Home, Bishop St., Derry/Londonderry

Senior Counsel to the Inquiry, Christine Smith QC, will deliver an opening address with regard to this module. Her opening address is expected to continue on Tuesday, 28th January. Further information on these and future hearings will be made available to the media closer to the time.

It is anticipated that all public hearings will take place at Banbridge Courthouse.

Under the Inquiry's Terms of Reference, the Inquiry has to complete its hearings and all investigative work by mid-summer 2015, and has to submit its report to the Northern Ireland Executive by 18 January 2016.

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

ENDS

Notes to Editors

1. The Opening Hearing to the public evidence sessions will take place commencing at **2pm GMT on Monday, 13th January 2014 in Banbridge Courthouse, Victoria St., Banbridge, Co. Down, BT32 3DH, Northern Ireland.**
2. Due to the limited space available, **the Inquiry will only permit accredited media representatives to enter the Courthouse on the day of the Opening Hearing.** It is essential, therefore, that you let the Inquiry's Press Officer, Liz Fawcett, know if you wish to attend the **Opening Hearing** no later than **2pm, Fri 10th Jan, so that she can ensure you are on the list of accredited media representatives for the Hearing.** Please let her know (i) how many representatives will be attending on behalf of your organisation (ii) if possible, who will be attending on behalf of your organisation. **The Inquiry reserves the right to refuse entry to anyone who is not on the list of accredited media representatives.** The Inquiry does not anticipate the need to initiate accreditation arrangements for the remainder of the public evidence sessions.
3. A **pool arrangement** is in place with BBC Northern Ireland and the Press Association to enable all accredited media outlets to have timely access to photographs, footage and audio material from the first hour of the proceedings. **Thereafter, no photography, filming or audio recording is permitted anywhere within Banbridge Courthouse or within its gates.** Media representatives who have received accreditation should take their seats no later than **1.50pm.**

4. 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.
5. We are unable to issue any advance copy of the opening address by the Chairman or Senior Counsel to the Inquiry. However, the Inquiry will distribute hard copies of the Chairman's opening address at or shortly after 2pm on 13th January to those media present at the Opening Hearing. We will not be providing any hard copy of the text of the opening address by the Inquiry's Senior Counsel.
6. Following an inter-departmental task force report, the Northern Ireland Executive, on 29th September 2011, announced there would be an Investigation and Inquiry into historical institutional abuse.
7. On 31st 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.
8. 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 18th October 2012. See <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/news-ofmdfm-191012-ministers-widen-historical>
9. On 12th 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 the 11th 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 the 19th January 2013.
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 will be 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 Counsel to the Inquiry, and other members of the Inquiry team are available on the Inquiry website: www.hiainquiry.org
14. The Inquiry is formally established under The Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 which became law on 19th January 2013.
15. 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

- Lissue Children's Unit, Lisburn
- Kincora Boys' Home, Belfast
- Bawnmore Children's Home, Newtownabbey

Juvenile Justice Institutions

- St Patrick's Training School, Belfast
- Lisnevin Training School, County Down
- Rathgael Training School, Bangor

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

16. With regard to the relatively high number of applications from Australia, journalists may wish to note that documentation examined by the Inquiry has revealed that, between 1947 and 1956, more than 120 children were sent from institutions in Northern Ireland to institutions in Australia (primarily Western Australia), as part of a UK government policy of child migration.
17. Further background information on the Inquiry is contained in a background briefing paper which is being issued to the media and which is available from the Inquiry's Press Officer. Further information is also available on the Inquiry's website. The Inquiry is also providing a briefing note on the Inquiry's practical arrangements which is being issued to the media and which is available from the Press Officer.
18. **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**