

Press Release

‘Talk to us - we’ll listen’ appeal

Sir Anthony Hart, Chairman of the Inquiry, will issue a renewed appeal later today [**11am on Thursday, 21st February**] for victims and survivors of childhood institutional abuse in Northern Ireland to come forward to the Inquiry.

Sir Anthony will be launching a promotional campaign which will utilise advertising on 80 bus shelters throughout Northern Ireland to try to engage victims and survivors who might not otherwise get to hear about the Inquiry. The Inquiry is also distributing outreach posters and literature to relevant organisations throughout the UK and the Republic of Ireland, and to libraries, GP surgeries and hospitals in Northern Ireland.

The campaign will be launched at a public presentation by the Chairman which will take place at **11am on Thursday, 21st February** at the **Ramada Encore, St Anne’s Square, Belfast**. At the presentation, Sir Anthony will review the Inquiry’s work to date, and outline his plans for the Inquiry’s investigation work. This will include details of the categories and numbers of institutions which have been identified so far as ones which may potentially be the subject of the Inquiry’s investigation.

In addition, Norah Gibbons, a member of the Inquiry’s Acknowledgement Forum Panel, will be explaining the work of the Forum. While the Inquiry Panel is holding the statutory inquiry into historical institutional abuse in Northern Ireland, the Forum is designed to provide a reassuring environment where victims and survivors can recount their experiences in a more relaxed setting than a statutory Inquiry chamber. Victims and survivors can opt to apply to testify to either or both the Acknowledgement Forum and/or the statutory Inquiry Panel.

Sir Anthony will also outline details of the practical support which the Inquiry is making available to witnesses.

Speaking ahead of the launch event in Belfast, a spokesperson for the Inquiry said:

“Sir Anthony wishes to ensure that as many victims and survivors as possible are made aware of the existence of the Inquiry, and of the steps which the Inquiry is taking to try to address the fears of those who may be worried about lifting the telephone to talk to the Inquiry.

“The Inquiry appreciates that, for many victims and survivors, recounting their experiences can be very painful and traumatic. We hope that today’s presentation and our promotional campaign will encourage potential witnesses to come forward.”

Application forms can be downloaded from the website www.hiainquiry.org or requested by calling the Inquiry helpline on Freephone 0800 068 4935. [The Inquiry would be grateful if the media could print and broadcast this contact information where feasible].

ENDS

Notes to Editors

1. We have issued the following, together with this press release: a photograph of a woman looking at the bus shelter advertisement and a jpeg image of the poster. **These images are strictly embargoed for use until 00.01 hours, Thursday, 21st February.**
2. The bus shelter advertising campaign commences on Monday, 25th February and will run for four weeks.
3. The Inquiry Presentation will take place from **11am to 12 noon at the Ramada Encore, St Anne's Square, Belfast, BT1 2LD.** Refreshments will be served from 10.30am and the media are asked to arrive by **10.50am.** **Filming, audio recording and photography will be permitted for the first 20 minutes of the proceedings only. Camerapeople and photographers will be asked to leave at that point. The audience has been given the opportunity to submit written questions in advance. No questions will be taken from the floor during the event. There will be a limited opportunity for media interviews after the event, and requests for interviews should be made in advance to the Inquiry's Press Officer.**
4. **Please bear in mind that individual victims or survivors may attend the presentation, and that their privacy should be respected. The media is asked not to film, photograph or interview any audience members inside the event venue. We would further request that you do not film, photograph or interview any audience members arriving at or leaving the event without their express permission. We would ask the media to exercise sensitivity and discretion in this regard.**
5. An invitation has already been issued to the media with regard to a media facility at the Inquiry's offices in Belfast which is taking place on **Wednesday, 20th February.** This will provide the media with the opportunity for longer interviews with both the Inquiry's Chairman and with Norah Gibbons, and with the opportunity to film/photograph the 'behind the scenes' work of the Inquiry. Attendance must be booked in advance through the Inquiry's Press Officer.
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. 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).

10. 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.
11. The Inquiry is formally established under The Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 which became law on 19th January 2013.
12. To date, 175 individuals have made applications to the Inquiry.
13. All requests for media interviews and further 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. She will be issuing a more detailed background briefing note for the media, prior to 21st February.