

Learning sponsor



Social work in a public inquiry: learning from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse

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INDEPENDENT INQUIRY
CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Social Work in a Public Inquiry

Justine Skeats & Cassy Harrison
October 2021



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@InquiryCSA (#TruthProject, #InquiryCSA,
#ResearchCSA)



INDEPENDENT INQUIRY
CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE



Key facts about the Inquiry

- Set up in 2015 to investigate organisations and institutions that have failed to protect children from sexual abuse
- Led by Chair, Professor Alexis Jay OBE and three Panel members
- Supported by a Victims and Survivors' Consultative Panel
- Independent of government
- Does not have the power to convict people of criminal offences, determine civil liability or award compensation

Terms of Reference

- Consider the extent to which **state and non-state institutions** have failed in their duty of care to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation
- Consider the extent to which those failings have since been addressed
- Identify **further action needed** to address any failings identified
- Consider the steps which are necessary for state and non-state institutions to take in order to **protect children from such abuse in the future**
- **Publish a report with recommendations**

Inquiry Core Projects



Investigations



The Inquiry is conducting **15** investigations in total

- Accountability and Reparations
- Cambridge House, Knowl View and Rochdale
- Child Sexual Exploitation by Organised Networks
- Children in Custodial Institutions
- Children Outside the UK
- Effective Leadership of Child Protection
- Lambeth Council
- Institutional Responses to Allegations Concerning Lord Janner
- Nottinghamshire Councils
- Religious Organisations and Settings
- Residential Schools
- The Anglican Church
- The Internet
- The Roman Catholic Church
- Westminster

What we've heard

Children in Custodial Institutions *The culture of these institutions [YOIs and STCs], particularly their closed nature and focus on containment and control, has not provided an environment that protects children from either physical or sexual abuse. Many witnesses supported this view, with a former Chief Inspector of Prisons describing children in custody as “very vulnerable children in a very dangerous place”.*

The Internet *The volume of online child sexual abuse and exploitation offences referred to law enforcement undoubtedly “represents a broader societal failure to protect vulnerable children”.*

Lambeth Council *Children in the care of Lambeth Council were subjected to levels of cruelty and sexual abuse that are hard to comprehend... Children in care were found to be pawns in a toxic power game within Lambeth Council and between the Council and central government.*

Recommendations

Child Migration Programmes investigation report

Recommendation: The Chair and Panel have recommended that the UK Government establishes a financial redress scheme for surviving former child migrants, providing for an equal award to every applicant. This is on the basis that they were all were exposed to the risk of sexual abuse.

The Anglican Church investigation report

Recommendation: The diocesan safeguarding officers should have the authority to make decisions independently of the diocesan bishop.

Victims and Survivors Forum

- Approximately **1600** members have registered to join the Victims and Survivors Forum
- To date, over **40** face-to-face and live-streamed events have taken place across England and Wales. Topics have included *the criminal justice system, culture change and redress*
- Due to the impacts of COVID-19, we have been providing members with an opportunity to share their thoughts, views and experiences with us via online surveys
- In our most recent online survey, Forum members shared with us how their protected characteristics may have affected their experiences of being a victim and survivor of child sexual abuse

What we have heard

*"I believe that the way that culture still leaves women with the message that their bodies are both a temptation and a commodity is a huge problem. Our bodies are used to sell everything from hot sauce to fashion, but often there is very little of the fashion on the body that is 'selling' it. It sends an unhealthy message. Moreover, we get the message that men have no control over their sex drive, thus giving us the responsibility to protect ourselves from them. If we do not, might we have been "asking" for it?" - **Protected Characteristics, February 2021***

*The majority of Forum members' experiences highlighted institutions' negative attitude towards their requests to access records, describing the responses as defensive and insensitive. We also heard about a range of practical barriers that victims and survivors faced when trying to access records. These include the complexity of the systems; records being destroyed or lost, and concerns about the data rights of third parties - **Access to Records, March 2020***

*Overall we heard there was support for the view that the police had made some improvements in how it responded to child sexual abuse, in recent years. Those that had reported allegations to the police, for example, thirty or forty years ago, had predominantly negative experiences. Where reports had been made more recently, there was a marked increase in the number of positive experiences we heard - **Criminal Justice System, May 2019***

Truth Project



- Over 6000 victims and survivors have now shared their experiences with the Truth Project
- Experiences could be shared in person, in writing, by telephone and by video call
- Inclusive and accessible approach with deaf or hard of hearing services available. Translation services are also available
- **'I will be heard'** awareness campaign released on Radio and TV across England and Wales
- The Truth Project will conclude in October 2021

Truth Project



‘So **grateful** I was given this opportunity to attend the Truth Project. For the first time in 50 years I felt like I was **believed**; I was treated with the utmost **respect** by all involved’

‘This was the first time I have told my story in any depth - to be **listened to** and properly **heard** was an **empowering** experience’

Research



- Increase the Inquiry's understandings of child sexual abuse and identify gaps in knowledge and current literature
- Analyse the information the Inquiry receives through the Truth Project, providing a rich source of quality data from victims and survivors' experiences
- Carry out new research, draw together cross discipline perspectives and develop research methods
- Support the Inquiry to ask the right questions

Research Findings



More than 84% respondents identified at least one form of barrier to support, such as personal, service-specific ie. long waiting times, family or community ie. wanting to protect the family, and practical or financial issues.

Support Services, August 2020

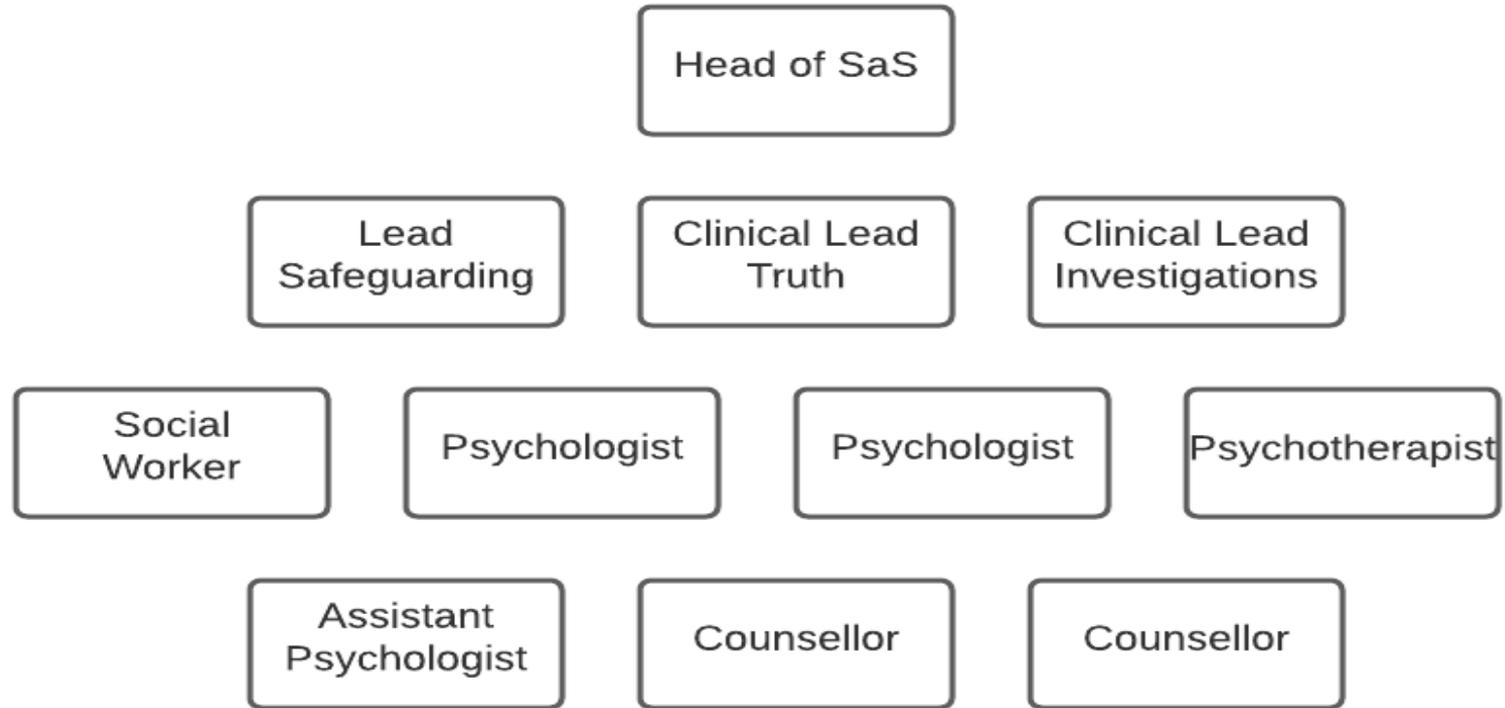
Many participants perceived that residential care staff or those working in the social services knew of or suspected instances of sexual abuse had occurred... Just under half of participants told someone about the sexual abuse at the time it was happening. Those who did disclose the abuse whilst it was ongoing frequently told someone in authority inside the institution.

Children's Homes & Residential Care, November 2019

The majority of perpetrators, reported by participants, sexually abused in the context of schools were male teachers or other educational staff... 15% of participants reported sexual abuse perpetrated by peers or older children, the second most frequently reported perpetrator type in the context of schools.

CSA in the Context of Schools, December 2020

Support & Safeguarding Team



Role of the Team

Safeguarding

- Duty
- Project Consultation
- Policy
- Safeguarding Training

Support

- Duty
- Project Consultation
- Trauma Informed Training
- Support Victim / Survivors

Trauma Informed Approach & Safeguarding

- Principles of Trauma Informed Engagement
- Not a statutory body
- Victims / Survivors remain in control
- Consent
- Recognising we are an institution
- TOR - Do no harm
- RIP - Reconceptualising parental non-engagement in child protection (Taggart D, Mason C, Webb S. 2020)

Final Report

- Published - 2022
- Process
- What next...





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Questions

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