

# House of Commons: Written Statement (HCWS371)

## Home Office

Written Statement made by: **The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mrs Theresa May)** on 12 Mar 2015.

### Statutory Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse

On 4 February 2015 I made a statement to the House announcing my intention to appoint Justice Lowell Goddard to head the Independent Child Sexual Abuse Inquiry, and that I would be disbanding the former Inquiry and would be setting up a new statutory inquiry under the 2005 Inquiries Act. I am pleased to be able to confirm today the setting up of the statutory Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, Justice Goddard's appointment as Chairman and the appointment of the Panel to the Inquiry.

Justice Goddard appeared before the Home Affairs Select Committee in a pre-appointment hearing on 11 February. The Committee subsequently published a report unanimously endorsing her appointment and making a number of recommendations. I will be writing to the Committee today with the Government response to that report.

From today, Thursday 12 March 2014, the Inquiry will be set up with statutory powers to compel witnesses to determine whether State and non-State institutions have taken seriously their duty of care to protect children from sexual abuse within England and Wales.

Having heard the concerns of survivors that the appointment of the former Panel was not transparent, we published the criteria for appointing the Panel online. This can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-inquiry-into-child-sexual-abuse-criteria-for-panel>. A copy was also placed in the House Library. The criteria were based on skills, expertise and due diligence and included the need for objectivity and professionalism. We were also explicit that Panel members should have no direct links to key institutions or individuals reasonably likely to be covered by the Inquiry.

We considered all nominations for membership of the Panel, those who expressed interest in being on the Panel and those who were nominated as part of the process to appoint a Chairman. In consultation with Justice Goddard, I have decided to appoint four Panel members, who have the range of skills and expertise required to take forward and lead the important work of the Panel in supporting the Chairman. The Panel members chosen are those who were assessed as most strongly matching these criteria. A statement of assessment against the criteria for each Panel member will be published, along with their conflict of interest declaration, on the Inquiry website in due course.

I have consulted Justice Goddard and I am pleased to be able to confirm today, that the Panel will consist of Drusilla Sharpling, Professor Alexis Jay, Ivor Frank and Malcolm Evans. Together, these individuals will represent a wide range of experience and expertise. Drusilla Sharpling is a qualified barrister with expertise in both policing and the Crown Prosecution Service; Professor Alexis Jay has expertise in social work and led the important work on the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham; Ivor Frank has extensive experience in family and human rights law, and expertise in child protection matters; Malcolm Evans is Chairman of the United Nations Subcommittee for the Prevention of Torture and professor of Public International Law at the University of Bristol. Malcolm also brings with him a Welsh perspective, which survivors have called for. In addition, the Panel will be informed by a number of expert advisers in the fields of health, education, and a psychologist with expertise in this sensitive area. All Panel members will

be formally appointed subject to their conflict of interest declarations and the appropriate security checks.

I also said I would review the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry in light of feedback from survivors. I have consulted with Justice Goddard and have agreed with her the final Terms of Reference which will also be placed in the House Library today and published on the Inquiry website. The two most important changes are the removal of any cut-off date for the work of the Inquiry and, reflecting the importance of survivors to the Inquiry, the explicit statement that survivors will be able to bear witness to the Inquiry and that support will be made available.

Survivors have been instrumental in the setting up of this statutory Inquiry. Both Justice Goddard and I are clear that they must also have a strong voice in the work of the Inquiry as it now moves forward. Justice Goddard will be writing to survivors and their representatives shortly to set out her intention to create a Survivors and Victims' Consultative Panel and to seek their views on how this will work and who should be on it. This Panel will have a specific role and function within the Inquiry.

I know that survivors were also keen that the Inquiry extended beyond England and Wales. However, as child protection is a devolved matter, it is right that other jurisdictions in the United Kingdom look at the issues within their own geographical remit so that they can take the action which is right to address the specific issues uncovered. I have said before, I am clear that no institution or individual should be able to fall through the gaps because of geographical boundaries.

The Terms of Reference make clear that the Inquiry will liaise with its counterparts elsewhere in the United Kingdom. To that end my officials have had initial discussions with the Scottish Government, who are in the process of setting up their own inquiry, the Hart Inquiry in Northern Ireland and the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry and have agreed with them and with the Child Sexual Abuse Inquiry that joint protocols will be set up with each inquiry to ensure that information can be shared and lines of investigation can be followed across geographical boundaries.

The protocols will be published by the Child Sexual Abuse Inquiry in due course. Additionally, as I made clear when I addressed the House on the 4 February, the Inquiry will have the full cooperation of Government and access to all relevant information.

I am confident that the new statutory Inquiry, under the chairmanship of Justice Goddard, will challenge individuals and institutions without fear or favour and get to the truth. This will not be an easy task but I believe the Inquiry now has the right leadership, individuals and powers to make this happen.

I wish Justice Goddard and the Panel every success as they now move forward with this important work.

The Inquiry's website can be found at <https://childsexualabuseinquiry.independent.gov.uk/>.