

HOME OFFICE

Child Sexual Abuse

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Theresa May): Further to my statement to the House on 7 July and my written ministerial statements of 9 July and 5 September 2014, I am pleased to announce that I have appointed the panel members to the independent inquiry panel of experts, which will consider whether public bodies – and other, non-state, institutions – have taken seriously their duty of care to protect children from sexual abuse.

Sharon Evans, Ivor Frank, Dame Moira Gibb, Professor Jenny Pearce OBE, Dru Sharpling CBE and Professor Terence Stephenson, will join Graham Wilmer MBE and Barbara Hearn OBE as panel members for the Independent Panel Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. Ben Emmerson QC is Counsel to the Inquiry, and Professor Alexis Jay OBE will serve as an expert adviser.

I am confident that this panel, under the chairmanship of Fiona Woolf CBE, will carry out a robust and thorough inquiry, and will challenge individuals and institutions without fear or favour, in order to consider this important issue, to learn the relevant lessons, and to prevent it happening again. The panel represents a diverse range of experience which includes social care, academia, law enforcement, health, media, the voluntary sector and those with experience of child sexual abuse.

The terms of reference have been drafted to ensure that this strong and balanced panel of independent experts can have full access to all the material it seeks, unless there is a statutory impediment to it doing so. The panel will consider matters from 1970 to the present, although this can be extended if evidence is provided that supports this, and will decide how and where to focus its efforts, in order to complete its work and make recommendations within a reasonable timeframe. The Terms of Reference have been finalised and a copy will be placed in the House Library. The panel will provide an update to Parliament before May next year.

Each of the panel members has written to me setting out in full any issues which might be seen to cast doubt on their impartiality. Those letters are published in full on the inquiry's website. I am confident that they will carry out their duties to the highest standards of impartiality and integrity.

Fiona Woolf has a long and distinguished career throughout which she has demonstrated the highest standards of integrity. I am confident that she will lead the work of the panel with authority, and that under her leadership the panel will get to the truth of these issues. They will do so on behalf of victims past and present to ensure that the sexual abuse of children is never

again a hidden crime, and that past failings are acknowledged, and recommendations made for further improvements to current arrangements in the light of the panel's findings. I wish the panel every success in its important work.

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