

Independent Inquiry Telford Child Sexual Exploitation

This is a living document, which will be updated during the course of the Inquiry's work
Latest Version dated ~~29 September~~ ~~31 July~~ 2020

FAQs

Who has set up the Inquiry?

In April 2018, Telford & Wrekin Council (the "Council") unanimously agreed to commission an independent, non-statutory Inquiry into child sexual exploitation where there is a link to Telford. The Inquiry is being funded by the Council. The Inquiry is however completely independent of the Council.

The Council implemented a process to ensure that the Inquiry was as independent as possible. This involved a two stage process:

- (a) Commissioning Body - the first stage was for the Council to appoint an independent Commissioning Body. Following a competitive tender process, Eversheds Sutherland (International) LLP was appointed as the Commissioning Body on 22 January 2019.
- (b) The independent Chair - the second stage was for the Commissioning Body to recruit and appoint an independent Chair, who will need to work with, and be accountable to, the Commissioning Body. Following a recruitment process conducted by the Commissioning Body, which included input from survivors, on 10 June 2019 Tom Crowther QC was appointed as the independent Chair.

Both the Commissioning Body and the Chair are independent from any organisation, body or individual in Telford.

Once both the Commissioning Body and Chair were in post, the first step was to prepare the Inquiry's Terms of Reference. A public consultation was held from 13 June to 5 July 2019 on the scope of the Terms of Reference. Following that consultation process, the Terms of Reference were finalised on 11 July 2019, with approval from the Council.

What is the Inquiry about?

The purpose of the Inquiry is to fully investigate and establish the facts of child sexual exploitation where there is a link to Telford (for example, victims/survivors may have been living in Telford at the time they were exploited, or the first instance of their exploitation, they may have been educated in Telford or they may have been trafficked to Telford to be exploited), to identify if, and where, public, and other, services have failed, and/or are failing, and where possible, to establish who is accountable for any failure and to make recommendations for the future. The full Terms of Reference for the Inquiry's work can be found here: www.iitcse.com/documents/terms-of-reference-3.

Who is leading the Inquiry?

The Inquiry is led by its Chair, Tom Crowther QC. The Chair is supported by members of the Commissioning Body, who are also responsible for the day to day operation of the Inquiry, alongside the Chair. The role of the Chair is to decide how the Inquiry is to investigate the matters within the Terms of Reference. The Chair supervises the running

Independent Inquiry Telford Child Sexual Exploitation

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Latest Version dated ~~29 September~~ ~~31 July~~ 2020

of the Inquiry, considers the evidence gathered and will write the report at its conclusion, making findings of fact and any relevant recommendations for the future. The Chair cannot make any findings of civil or criminal liability, nor can he award any compensation.

Is the Inquiry independent?

Yes. Both the Chair and the Commissioning Body are working independently from the Council, its agencies, the Police, victims and survivors, and other organisations and individuals.

How will the Inquiry be gathering evidence?

The Inquiry Team (i.e. the Chair and the Commissioning Body) will be gathering both relevant documentation and witness evidence in order to assist the Chair's investigations.

In relation to documents, the Chair will be asking a number of organisations to provide him with all information relevant to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference. The Chair will also make further requests for specific documents as and when he becomes aware of what other documents might/could be available. Any other individual or organisation that has documents that are relevant to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference should also contact the Chair (through the Inquiry helpline, email, or through its postal address) to discuss disclosing these documents to the Inquiry.

In relation to witness evidence, where an individual has expressed an interest in giving evidence to the Inquiry and where they have information relevant to its Terms of Reference, the Inquiry Team will arrange for, and assist them with, providing their evidence to the Inquiry. In addition, the Chair will be contacting other individuals, including, but not limited to, public officials, medical practitioners, police officers and directors and employees of relevant private and public companies, charities and trusts, where they are considered to have potentially relevant evidence, and asking them to provide evidence, again assisted by the Inquiry Team.

What should I do if I think I have information that may be useful to the Inquiry?

The Chair would very much like to hear from you. Please get in touch with the Inquiry Team (contact details can be found here - www.iitcse.com/contact), who will be able to answer any questions you have and provide you with further information.

Do I need to have a lawyer to give evidence to the Inquiry?

You do not need to be represented by a lawyer in order to give evidence to the Chair. As stated above, the Inquiry Team is independent and will be able to assist you when you provide your evidence.

This is a living document, which will be updated during the course of the Inquiry's work
Latest Version dated ~~29 September~~ 31 July 2020

How will evidence be gathered from witnesses?

There are a number of ways that witnesses can give evidence to the Chair. The Inquiry Team will be flexible depending on the circumstances of witnesses. If this involves meeting with members of the Inquiry Team, that meeting can take place at a location convenient to you. You may wish to meet at your home, or at a different location, and the Inquiry Team can assist you with identifying an appropriate location if you wish. You can be accompanied at the meeting by a friend, relative or other individual by way of support. You can request an all-female or all-male interviewing team if you wish. The Inquiry Team will accommodate requests and be flexible as much as possible to ensure that people feel as comfortable as possible when providing evidence, although the safety of all concerned must of course take priority.

What happens after providing evidence to the Inquiry?

Your evidence will be provided to the Chair. The Chair will review all witness evidence submitted. The Chair may then decide that he would like to meet certain witnesses to discuss their evidence further. The Inquiry Team can discuss the arrangements that may be necessary if, or when, you are asked to give further evidence to the Chair, and will put those arrangements in place.

Who will my information be shared with?

As a general rule, the information you provide to the Chair will be confidential and will not be shared with any organisations or individuals without your consent. There are however a few exceptions to this, when the Chair or Commissioning Body are under an obligation to share certain information. The instances when this may happen are explained below. There is however no "blanket rule". Each case will be decided individually. When information sharing does happen, information is shared in confidence and the individual or organisation to whom the information is shared cannot make that information public and they cannot share it with others, save for in exceptional circumstances, for example if required to seek legal advice or representation.

The Chair or Commissioning Body may need to share information:

1. with the Police where we believe that the safety of an individual is at risk;
2. with a medical professional or counsellor, where they are required to treat such information as confidential, where we believe that the safety of an individual is at risk;

In the above situations 1 and 2, the Chair or Commissioning Body will, wherever possible, discuss the disclosure with the individuals concerned and take on board any comments he/she may have, but where we consider that there is a real and imminent risk to an individual (or where legal obligations prevent the Inquiry discussing the disclosure in advance), we may share information without any further reference to that individual.

Independent Inquiry
Telford Child Sexual
Exploitation

This is a living document, which will be updated during the course of the Inquiry's work
Latest Version dated ~~29 September~~ 31 July 2020

3. The Chair or Commissioning Body may need to share an individual's name, and possibly other personal data such as a date of birth, with a person or organisation where we believe that they hold information that is relevant to the Inquiry, for example, when requesting social services files or Police records;
4. The Chair or Commissioning Body may need to share information to comply with a legal obligation, such as a Court order; and/or
5. In order to be fair when investigating allegations and to enable the Inquiry to make criticisms of organisations and individuals, where an individual makes allegations about,
 - an organisation which has/had responsibilities towards an individual, for example, should have acted to protect an individual; and/or
 - a person who is named as being a perpetrator,

the Chair or Commissioning Body may be required to provide the person and/or organisation about whom the allegations are made, with information about the nature of the allegations raised, together with the identity of the person making the allegations, in order to allow the organisation and/or individual the opportunity to challenge or rebut any allegations made against them or to seek legal advice and/or representation in respect of the allegations. This process is called Maxwellisation. This is a legal requirement. The Inquiry must be fair to everyone involved with the Inquiry's work.

We realise that some people will be anxious at the prospect of what they have told the Inquiry being shared with the organisation that had responsibilities for them or with a person they have named as a perpetrator. If you do not want your information to be shared by us with the named perpetrator or the individual/organisation that had obligations towards you, you will need to let us know. The information will then not be shared. You should however be aware that where this is the case, the information can also then not be used by the Inquiry, for example to make criticisms of individuals or organisations or to seek further information from the organisation or individual in order to investigate the allegations.

If we share your name with an organisation or person in this way, we will require that organisation or person to keep the information confidential. The individual or organisation to whom the information is shared cannot make that information public and they cannot share it with others, save for in exceptional circumstances, for example if required to seek legal advice.

In each of the above situations mentioned above, the Chair or Commissioning Body will only share the information that is necessary to fulfil the obligations. We will not share more information than is needed.

The Inquiry Team will process personal data in compliance with the applicable Data Protection Laws. For further information about how the Chair and the Commissioning Body will process any personal data they receive, your rights over your personal data and how

Independent Inquiry Telford Child Sexual Exploitation

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Latest Version dated ~~29 September~~ ~~31 July~~ 2020

you can exercise them, please see the Inquiry Privacy Notice: www.iitcse.com/privacy-policy.

The Inquiry Team is however happy to talk you through how this would work in practice if there are any concerns about information being shared.

Does the Inquiry have a Freedom of Information policy?

The Inquiry is not covered by the Freedom of Information Act, but will endeavour to conduct proceedings in as transparent manner as possible, whilst protecting individual's personal data. This includes publishing update reports on the progress of the Inquiry's work.

As the Inquiry operates independently of the Council, the Council will not have any access to information held by the Inquiry, other than the final published Inquiry Report, any requests for information made by the Chair to the Council, or copies of any information the Council has provided itself to the Inquiry Team. It is unlikely that the Council will disclose any of the above information in response to any Freedom of Information Act requests made to it for this information, as there are valid exemptions allowing that information to be withheld.

What information will be made public?

The Inquiry is not a statutory inquiry. It is however funded by the public purse, and therefore it will be as transparent as possible. The information that the Inquiry will not make public, including in the final Inquiry Report is as follows:

- People who are victims/survivors – the identities and any identifying information¹ will not be published without their consent. If families/friends or supporters of victims/survivors provide information that, if disclosed, could reveal the identities of victims/survivors, this information will also be protected.
- People named as perpetrators – the identities of those accused of sexually exploiting children will not be revealed, unless they have been convicted of that offence.

To avoid disclosure of this information, documents may be withheld or information contained in documents may be redacted. "Redaction" means blacking out any words in documents which could reveal a person's identity.

This information may still be shared with others in a limited set of circumstances, as explained in the response to the question above "*Who will my information be shared with?*"

¹ For example, information about a victim/survivor which could identify them from that information alone, or that information in conjunction with other information, such as the victim/survivor's address and dates of attendance at school.

This is a living document, which will be updated during the course of the Inquiry's work
Latest Version dated ~~29 September~~ 31 July 2020

How is my information being held by the Inquiry?

Only a small group of individuals, who are engaged by the Inquiry Team to work on the Inquiry, will have access to your information, including your personal data (unless it is shared in the circumstances described above), and they will all:

- have received training on their data protection obligations and keeping personal data secure;
- be subject to contractual and/or professional obligations of confidentiality;
- be given access to personal data only where necessary;
- have undergone relevant DBS checks; and
- have the ability to be monitored and audited in respect of what personal data they have accessed.

Eversheds Sutherland has also implemented extensive measures intended to ensure that any information, including Personal Data processed for and/or by the Chair, is kept secure and separate from information used in the course of its/his other work. These measures include:

- the use of encryption;
- the use of systems to restrict access to the information to specified individuals only;
- keeping a record of who has had access to specific information in Eversheds Sutherland systems and when they accessed it;
- monitoring all e-mails sent and received by individuals using Eversheds Sutherland's systems in the course of their work for the Inquiry; and
- ensuring that all hard copy documents relating to the Inquiry held by Eversheds Sutherland are stored in locked, secure locations that can only be accessed by the staff engaged by Eversheds Sutherland to work on the Inquiry.

Information, including personal data provided to the Chair of the Inquiry, may be transferred to IT systems operated by third-party contractors ("Processors") acting on behalf of the Inquiry Team for the purposes of storing, reviewing and analysing documents and information. Where this is the case, these Processors are subject to stringent contractual obligations to ensure the security and confidentiality of the information they hold on behalf of the Chair and/or the Commissioning Body. This means that they cannot do anything with that information unless the Inquiry Team has instructed them to do so. These Processors cannot share any information with any organisation apart from the Inquiry Team unless instructed to do so by the Inquiry Team, except where required to by law or Court Order. The Inquiry Team has undertaken, and/or will undertake, appropriate checks to ensure that, prior to their appointment, any third-party Processors provide sufficient guarantees to comply with the Data Protection Laws; and if appointed, are subject to stringent contractual obligations to ensure the security of information and to comply with Data Protection Laws.

Independent Inquiry Telford Child Sexual Exploitation

This is a living document, which will be updated during the course of the Inquiry's work
Latest Version dated ~~29 September~~ ~~31 July~~ 2020

For further details about how your information will be held please see the Inquiry Privacy Notice: www.iitcse.com/privacy-policy.

Is the Inquiry's email address and contact number secure?

Yes. The web email account is password protected and only members of the Inquiry Team have access to it. For the avoidance of doubt, emails and calls made to the Inquiry cannot be accessed by the Council or any other organisation or individual.

Do you intend to hold public hearings?

The Inquiry is not a statutory inquiry. It is however funded by the public purse, and therefore it will be as transparent as possible without revealing confidential information. The Chair may choose to hold witness sessions, where witnesses are asked to meet with the Chair to share their evidence. It is likely that such sessions will be held in private. It is possible however that the Chair will hold public hearings in the future if this is appropriate and that will depend on the issues encountered and the response of the individuals or public bodies involved. No victims or survivors will be required to give evidence publicly, unless they wish to do so.

What support is available to witnesses?

The Inquiry is aware that, for many victims/survivors and their friends, families and supporters, the process of recounting relevant events can be traumatic. The Inquiry therefore asked the Council to commission an independent support service for the purposes of the Inquiry's work. This service is being delivered by an organisation called Base 25 and it is intended to provide witnesses with independent support and will treat any information provided to it as confidential. Further details about the service provided and how to contact them can be found on the Inquiry's website here: <https://www.iitcse.com/confidential-support>.

What caused the delay in the provision of the witness support service?

At an early stage, the Chair and Commissioning Body asked the Council to fund and procure a witness support service to support the Inquiry's work. The Inquiry was not however part of the commissioning process for the service; this service is designed to be independent of the Inquiry's work.

I am not sure whether I want to give evidence to the Inquiry

The Inquiry Team are happy to meet with people, or speak to them over the phone, before they agree to provide evidence to the Chair. You may want to meet us in person before

Independent Inquiry Telford Child Sexual Exploitation

This is a living document, which will be updated during the course of the Inquiry's work
Latest Version dated ~~29 September~~ 31 July 2020

you decide if you want to talk to provide evidence. The Inquiry Team can answer any questions you have and deal with any of your concerns.

How long will the Inquiry last?

At this stage, the Chair and the Commissioning Body have a limited understanding of how many documents will be provided to the Inquiry and the numbers of witnesses who might have relevant evidence to provide, and be willing to engage with its work. As a result, the scale of the work that faces the Inquiry, for example the number of documents that will need to be reviewed and analysed, the number of witnesses that will need to be spoken to, and the various lines of investigation that will be involved, remains unknown. This means that providing a fixed date by which the Inquiry will conclude is a challenge. Unexpected issues can also arise during the course of an inquiry's work, which impacts both timescales and the various planned stages.

Despite these challenges, the Chair and the Commissioning Body have designed a provisional inquiry process, which sets out the likely key stages of the Inquiry's work, and the current anticipated timescales. This was delivered to the Council's Cabinet on 11 July 2019. The provisional Inquiry process indicated that the final report could be delivered in early 2021. This date was however an estimate and the Inquiry process will need to remain flexible.

To some extent the position has not changed. Whilst the Inquiry has received some documentation, it expects to receive a lot more. The number of witnesses also remains unclear. For that reason, the Inquiry's timetable will rightly need to remain flexible. Regular progress reports will continue to be published so that there is visibility as to progress and the current stage that the Inquiry's work is at.

The Inquiry will keep these timescales under review and publish an update on its website in due course.

Can the Inquiry make people or organisations give evidence?

The Inquiry has been set up voluntarily by the Council and has no statutory powers. That means the Inquiry cannot require individuals or organisations to provide evidence (this is different to a statutory public inquiry set up under the Inquiries Act 2005). The Inquiry has however received assurances from a number of key stakeholders, including the Council and West Mercia Police, that they will fully cooperate with the Inquiry, its work and its requests for evidence. The Inquiry therefore expects that documents and evidence will be provided voluntarily. If such cooperation is not provided, the Inquiry will make this publicly known.

Independent Inquiry
Telford Child Sexual
Exploitation

This is a living document, which will be updated during the course of the Inquiry's work
Latest Version dated ~~29 September~~ 31 July 2020

How will people be protected?

The Inquiry Team understands the concerns that people may have about coming forward and giving evidence. The Inquiry Team will adopt a flexible approach to individuals who wish to give evidence and will work with them to make them as comfortable as possible.

Is the Inquiry looking into issues that are being considered by other legal proceedings, including Police investigations?

The Chair will pay close attention to the work and investigations being carried out elsewhere and will factor those into his work. The Inquiry Team will work with the Police to ensure that all relevant information is provided to the Inquiry, without prejudicing any police investigations or prosecutions.

Will you notify witnesses/individuals and organisations before you criticise them in the report?

Yes. As a matter of fairness, the Chair must not include criticism of a person/organisation in his report unless they have been made aware of criticisms that may be made, and been given a reasonable opportunity to respond. This is a legal process known as Maxwellisation. Any information shared as part of this Maxwellisation process will be done on a confidential basis.

Will the final report be available to the public and if so, how can it be accessed?

The report will be made available to the public. Further information will be made available nearer the time.

How can I be kept informed of the Inquiry's progress?

Any significant developments are reported under the "News" section on the home page of the Inquiry website. The Inquiry Team will also be publishing progress reports during the course of its work, and these will also be made available on the website. Significant updates and new information will also be posted on the Inquiry Twitter account @Official_IITCSE, so that if you follow this account you will be notified. These tweets often also provide direct links to certain pieces of information or documents. The Inquiry Team monitors this account and takes notice of the comments made in respect of its tweets. However, the Inquiry Twitter account has been set up so the Inquiry Team can keep people informed. The Inquiry will not respond to tweets or like or retweet other tweets, or follow other users.

Is there a complaints process?

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Independent Inquiry
Telford Child Sexual
Exploitation

This is a living document, which will be updated during the course of the Inquiry's work
Latest Version dated ~~29 September~~ 31 July 2020

The Inquiry does welcome feedback about its work. The best way to engage with us is via the Inquiry email: mail@iitcse.com. If you have a formal complaint to make, please set out the details in writing and send via email (mail@iitcse.com) or post (c/o Eversheds Sutherland, 115 Colmore Row, Birmingham, B3 3AL) for the attention of Sarah Jones.

How many victims and survivors have come forward so far?

Victims and survivors are at the core of the Inquiry's remit; survivors were an early consultee on the form of the Inquiry and on the recruitment process that led to the Chair's appointment. There has also been engagement with victims and survivors in the evidence taking process. The Inquiry has guaranteed discretion and privacy to those who want it so it won't be providing numbers before publication of the report, save to say that a number of victims and survivors have come forward and agreed to provide their evidence, which will be crucial for the Inquiry's work.

How many family members of victims and survivors have come forward to date?

Again, the Inquiry has promised that it will be discrete and treat individuals' involvement confidential, so it won't be revealing specific numbers, or any other detail that could lead to potential identification. The potential impact of identification is so great that the Inquiry will take a very cautious approach when making information related to witnesses public.

What response have you had so far from other organisations and professionals or retired/former public body workers?

So far as the key stakeholders are concerned, the Chair has had a succession of positive meetings and has been assured of co-operation. The Inquiry has already received over 37,000 pages of documents and anticipate a much greater volume of further documents.

So far as individuals are concerned, we have had approaches which we will follow up in the evidence taking stage.

In your experience, is it normal for public bodies to be so forthcoming with providing documentary evidence and for "live" witnesses to need encouragement and reassurance to come forward?

The fact that public bodies are forthcoming reflects the public concern about the issue. In the case of Telford and Wrekin Council, it commissioned the Inquiry; it would be odd if it chose then not to co-operate.

So far as the Inquiry making a 'Call for Evidence' is concerned, which it did on 26 November 2019, this doesn't reflect any perception of public reluctance; it was simply to indicate that the Inquiry is now fully open for business. It is quite common for inquiries to make public calls asking for witnesses to come forward. Without witness evidence, the Inquiry cannot be effective in its work.

Independent Inquiry
Telford Child Sexual
Exploitation

This is a living document, which will be updated during the course of the Inquiry's work
Latest Version dated ~~29 September~~ 31 July 2020

Have any witnesses either a. delayed giving evidence (beyond normal diary scheduling) or b. declined to do so?

No.

Will the Inquiry actively approach key witnesses, including survivors and victims, and families?

Yes, where appropriate and subject to the relevant data protection obligations concerning the protection and use of personal data.

Will the Inquiry be contacting perpetrators?

The Inquiry has not yet spoken to any perpetrators, but if any come forward we will listen to them.

Which stakeholders has the Inquiry met with?

The Inquiry is talking to a wide variety of public bodies and figures, including non-local public bodies. Some will be obvious – for example Telford & Wrekin Council, West Mercia Police, IICSA. Others have spoken publicly about our meetings – for example Lucy Allan MP. The Inquiry however wants to be able to approach potentially relevant parties privately in the first instance because we feel that is a good way to secure co-operation. Therefore, the Inquiry won't be releasing an updated list of organisations or individuals. There will be a full list of those who have assisted in the final report.

What can you say about the information you have gathered so far? Are any patterns or themes emerging, and early findings that can be made?

The Chair will not be revealing information piecemeal or drawing interim conclusions. The Chair considers that the process is best served by hearing all the evidence before reaching conclusions.

Have the Inquiry's investigations so far suggested that a. Telford's CSE problem is specifically centred around the Pakistani, or South Asian, community, and b. police, the council, the NHS or other authorities are "shying away from" the background of the perpetrators or alleged perpetrators?

The Chair will not be issuing interim conclusions. The Chair considers that the process is best served by hearing all the evidence before reaching conclusions. If however the Chair finds that an official response was inappropriate or inadequate because of misplaced

Independent Inquiry
Telford Child Sexual
Exploitation

This is a living document, which will be updated during the course of the Inquiry's work
Latest Version dated ~~29 September~~ 31 July 2020

concerns about giving offence, that is exactly the sort of matter upon which comment will be made.

Does the Inquiry have any idea of the numbers of victims involved in CSE in Telford so far?

In terms of the Chair making his own evidence based assessment, he is not yet that stage.

Does the Chair believe CSE remains a current and active problem faced by young people in Telford?

CSE happens today in every town in the country – including Telford. The current nature and extent of CSE within Telford is something the Inquiry will seek to determine.

Will there be any communication with IICSA, the public inquiry which is due to examine "Child Sexual Exploitation by Organised Networks" in April and May 2020?

The Inquiry has had useful contact with IICSA and more is planned in the New Year.

Have any aspects of the definitions in the Inquiry's Terms of Reference been challenged, and is there any potential for altering them as the Inquiry progresses?

The Inquiry's Terms of Reference are broad, but fixed. If however the Chair or Commissioning Body have any concern that the scope of the Terms of Reference was in some way impeding the Inquiry's work then they would look at that very carefully and take steps to address that, as necessary.

What is the difference between this Inquiry and the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA)?

IICSA is a public inquiry, commissioned by the Government and established under the Inquiries Act 2005. As a statutory inquiry, IICSA is able to compel organisations and individuals to give evidence, and its purpose is to make recommendations to both organisations and the Government about how to protect children from abuse in the future.

As a much wider inquiry, considering all aspects of child abuse on a national level, IICSA has narrowed its specific areas of focus for its investigation on CSE by Organised Networks, to six geographical areas across the country. This does not include Telford or the wider region. IICSA has therefore confirmed that it will not be looking into CSE in Telford specifically as part of its investigation. More can be read about IICSA's investigation into

Independent Inquiry Telford Child Sexual Exploitation

This is a living document, which will be updated during the course of the Inquiry's work
Latest Version dated ~~29 September~~ ~~31 July~~ 2020

CSE by Organised Networks here: <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/investigations/child-sexual-exploitation-by-groups-and-gangs>.

This Inquiry is not a statutory inquiry and it is not a public inquiry under the Inquiries Act 2005; it is an independent inquiry commissioned by Telford & Wrekin Council to focus on issues relating to CSE in Telford. The Chair to this Inquiry works according to different Terms of Reference, and will explore different themes from IICSA. This Inquiry will focus solely on CSE where there is a link to Telford. The purpose of this Inquiry is to identify whether there have been any failures by organisations or services within Telford in recognising and responding to instances of CSE, and to make recommendations for the future.

I attended the Truth Project held by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse when it came to Telford. Will the information I gave to IICSA at the Truth Project be taken forward by IICSA as part of the Public Inquiry, when considering CSE by Organised Networks?

If you provided details of your experiences to IICSA in writing, over the phone, or by attending the 'pop-up' in Telford and your case only relates to CSE in Telford, it is likely that this information was given as part of the Truth Project listening exercise. IICSA has confirmed that stories told via the Truth Project do not constitute giving formal evidence to IICSA's Public Hearings Project, but instead will be considered anonymously by the IICSA panel to help make recommendations to the Government and organisations to help protect children in the future. As explained above, the investigation being carried out by IICSA into CSE by Organised Networks will not specifically cover CSE that has taken place in Telford.

You can read more about the Truth Project here: <https://www.truthproject.org.uk/about-the-truth-project>. If you have any questions about how the information you have given to IICSA will be treated, you should contact them directly via contact@iicsa.org.uk.

If you feel you have evidence relating to CSE in Telford and you would like your evidence to be considered by the Chair of this Inquiry, which is focussed on Telford, please do contact us.

Can the Inquiry obtain the information I gave to IICSA directly from IICSA, instead of me having to tell my story again?

Unfortunately, this is not possible. Due to legal protections afforded by the General Data Protection Regulations and the privacy policies both inquiries are required to have in place, we are not able to obtain information from IICSA on your behalf. You would need to contact IICSA directly to obtain a copy of any information you have already provided to them, which you could then pass on to this Inquiry.

Independent Inquiry
Telford Child Sexual
Exploitation

This is a living document, which will be updated during the course of the Inquiry's work
Latest Version dated ~~29 September~~ 31 July 2020

I have already spoken to IICSA. Does this prevent me from speaking to you too?

No. If you would like to share your experiences with this Inquiry, and you believe you have evidence in relation CSE which is specific to Telford (or you have some link to Telford), then we would like to hear from you.

Independent Inquiry Telford Child Sexual Exploitation

This is a living document, which will be updated during the course of the Inquiry's work
Latest Version dated **29 September 31 July 2020**

