

This is a living document, which will be updated during the course of the Inquiry's work
Latest Version dated 3 October 2019

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

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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.

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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.

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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

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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.

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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.

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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. 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 has therefore asked the Council to commission an independent support service for the purposes of the Inquiry's work. This service is intended to provide witnesses with independent support and will treat any information provided to it as confidential. Once the service is in place, further details will be published on the Inquiry's website and provided to those individuals who are giving evidence.

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 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

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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 is however an estimate and the Inquiry process will need to remain flexible.

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.

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.

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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. The Inquiry does welcome feedback about its work. The best way to engage with us is via the Inquiry email: mail@iitcse.com.