

Rt. Hon. Rishi Sunak MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
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28 November 2022

Dear Prime Minister

Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse

One month ago, after seven years of work, 2.5 million pages of evidence and witness statements, thousands of hours of evidence sessions and the involvement of more than 7,300 victims and survivors, the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse published its final recommendations.

The testimony heard by the Inquiry has been shocking and sobering. The report called the nature and scale of abuse in England and Wales "horrific and deeply disturbing" and said institutions too often "prioritised their personal and institutional reputations above the welfare of those they were duty bound to protect". It concluded that "child protection must be given a much greater priority in public life."

The Inquiry is winding down but the need to prevent child sexual abuse remains as critical as ever. The last Crime Survey for England and Wales estimated that 3.1 million adults had experienced sexual abuse as a child and NSPCC analysis shows last year there were more than 85,000 reports to police of child sexual abuse.

The baton has been passed to us – charities, law enforcement, frontline public sector organisations, health bodies and other organisations large and small – to inspire a national mission to prevent child sexual abuse and provide much better support to victims and survivors.

We are writing to underline our commitment to doing this and to call on you and your Government to join us in ensuring the Inquiry's work is a watershed moment for our country.

We believe this can be a defining moment for child protection. But that requires action and attention. This report must not end up on a shelf alongside other reports and reviews commissioned in the wake of tragedies.

Particularly because, a decade ago, victims and survivors courageously broke the silence to expose endemic child sexual abuse and a catastrophic failure to protect and support them. IICSA has been so much more than a statutory inquiry for them. For many years they have revisited their trauma daily to ensure that we never have to have another inquiry like this. Victims and survivors deserve our gratitude for their bravery and determination. They must be at the heart of lasting, positive change now.

None of us can unsee, unhear or unknow what has been very clearly laid out in the Inquiry's final report. We are now the custodians of this evidence and have a responsibility to act. As leaders, we are in agreement that our organisations – large and small – which come into contact with children must have strong policies, training and leadership to create a culture that recognises and responds to concerns about a child's welfare.

We recognise we have a vital role in keeping children safe from sexual abuse and we will play our part.

But we need political leadership from you and your Government to translate the Inquiry's findings and recommendations into lasting change.

Having had the courage to commission the Inquiry and the conviction to support it to ask big, searching questions about what needs to change, it is now vital that the Government responds effectively. We understand that it will take time to work through the Inquiry's detailed recommendations and look forward to seeing the formal Government response within six months. There are, however, actions that can be taken straight away to demonstrate your Government is serious about implementing the findings from the Inquiry.

Firstly, vital to translating the recommendations in the final report into a robust system that truly keeps children safe now and in the future is a champion at the heart of Government policymaking. You could, as recommended by the Inquiry, appoint a Cabinet-level Minister for Children.

Secondly, your Government can deliver the Online Safety Bill through Parliament as soon as possible with child protection measures at the heart of the legislation.

Thirdly, the Inquiry's work and the Truth Project in particular has underlined that victims and survivors of child sexual abuse do not currently receive the help they need to rebuild their lives. The Government must continue work on its much-needed Victims Bill, including delivering on the recommendations made by the Inquiry for victims to have access to specialist therapeutic support services and making changes to criminal injuries compensation policies and processes for dealing with claims.

The Inquiry unearthed a "national epidemic" of child sexual abuse. This has done unimaginable damage to the lives of those it has affected. We have an obligation to the victims and survivors who shared their horrific experiences of how they were failed to address this. We urge you to play your part in ensuring that children are protected from sexual abuse and failings of the scale documented by the Inquiry can never happen again.

Yours sincerely,

Sir Peter Wanless
Chief Executive
NSPCC

Melanie Armstrong
Chief Executive
Action for Children

Lynn Perry MBE
Chief Executive
Barnardo's

Anna Daroy
Chief Executive Officer
British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)

Ian Dean
Director
Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse

Will Gardner OBE
Chief Executive Officer
Childnet

Brigid Robinson MBE
Managing Director
Coram Voice

Sabah Kaiser
Ethnic Minorities Ambassador, IICSA

Terry Galloway
Managing Director
Galloway Homes

Angela Salt OBE
Chief Executive Officer
Girlguiding UK

May Baxter-Thornton
Sheila Coates MBE
Lucy Duckworth
Emma Lewis MBE
Kit Shellam
Chris Tuck MAAT ACMA CGMA
IICSA Victims & Survivors Consultative Panel

Susie Hargreaves OBE
Chief Executive Officer
Internet Watch Foundation

Becca Fetterman
Director of Youth and Students
Liberal Judaism (LJ)

Tania Woodgate
Chief Executive Officer
Male Survivors Partnership

Zara Mohammed
Secretary General
Muslim Council of Britain (MCB)

Gabrielle Shaw
Chief Executive
NAPAC (National Association for People Abused in Childhood)

Anna Feuchtwang
Chief Executive
National Children's Bureau

Nancy Sayer and Dr Peter Green
Co-Chairs
National Network of Designated Health Professionals for Children

Deputy Chief Constable Ian Critchley QPM
Lead for Child Protection, Abuse and Investigation
National Police Chief's Council (NPCC)

Rita Waters
Group CEO
National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)

Sheila Taylor MBE
Chief Executive
NWG Network

Jayne Butler
Chief Executive Officer
Rape Crisis

Robert Okunnu
Interim Chief Executive Officer
Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health

Lisa Thompson
Chief Executive Officer
RSVP (Rape and Sexual Violence Project)

Imogen McCabe
Chief Executive Officer
Southmead Project Specialist support Bristol

Garry Williams
Chief Executive Officer
Survivors UK

Mark Russell
Chief Executive Officer
The Children's Society

Mark Bullingham
Chief Executive Officer
The Football Association

Gary Cliffe, former footballer
Jamie Cartwright, former footballer
Ellie Guedalla, football player and coach
Dion Raitt, former footballer
Group members who have not waived their anonymity
Dr Zoe Hilton, Independent Chair
Professor Mike Hartill, Centre for Child Protection & Safeguarding in Sport, Edge Hill University
The Football Association Survivor Support and Safeguarding Advisory Group

Deborah Denis
Chief Executive Officer
The Lucy Faithfull Foundation

Matt Hyde OBE
Chief Executive Officer
The Scout Association

Fay Maxted OBE
The Survivors Trust (also member of IICSA Victims & Survivors Consultative Panel)

CC. Rt. Hon Suella Braverman KC MP, Home Secretary