

Nottingham City Council
Audit Committee – 27 September 2019

Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse

1. Background

- The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) was established as a statutory inquiry on 12 March 2015 to consider the growing evidence of historical institutional failures to protect children from child sexual abuse, and to make recommendations to ensure the best possible protection for children in future.
- The inquiry launched 13 investigations into a broad range of institutions identified on the basis of the Panel's criteria for selection of investigations.
- In November 2015, Justice Goddard (the then chair of the Inquiry) announced that the independent investigation into child sexual exploitation would look into the historical failure to protect children in the care of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Councils.
- A significant number of allegations (including physical and sexual abuse) of historical abuse in children's homes, previously operated by Nottinghamshire County and Nottingham City councils and other organisations, have been made, dating back to the 1940's.
- Currently, there are a significant number of actions, both criminal and civil, that are under way:
 1. *Operation Equinox which is the overarching umbrella for a variety of operations including:*
 - *Operation Daybreak*, which was launched by Nottinghamshire Police in 2011.
 - *Operation Xeres*, investigating similar allegations in north Nottinghamshire, launched in 2015.
 2. *Civil Claims against both the County and City Councils.*

2. Scope of the Inquiry – The Nottinghamshire Context

1. Institutional responses to disclosures of allegations of sexual abuse in relation to Beechwood since 1967 to the present and the barriers to disclosure of such allegations.
2. A case study into the institutional responses to disclosure of allegations of child sexual abuse in foster carer and the barriers to disclosure of such allegations.
3. A case study into the institutional responses to disclosures of allegations of sexual abuse carried out by children against other children in the care of the Councils, and the barriers to disclosure of such allegations.

3. **Progress**

- The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse requested a variety of information from both Councils since January 2016. The requests were in relation to current and historical policies, procedures, guidance, investigation reports, civil claims, allegations against staff and foster carers and case records.
- The Public Hearing ran from 01–26 October (with a one week break).

4. **Publication of Findings**

On 31 July 2019, IICSA published its findings into the extent of any institutional failures to protect children in the care of Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Councils from sexual abuse.

There were two recommendations for the City Council, for which we will need to publish our response within six months of the publication of this report:

1. Nottingham City Council should assess the potential risk posted by current and former foster carers directly provided by the council in relation to the sexual abuse of children. They should also ensure that current and former foster carers provided by external agencies are assessed by those agencies. Any concerns which arise should be referred to the appropriate body or process, including the Disclosure and Barring Service, the local authority designated officer (LADO) or equivalent, the fostering panel and the police.
2. Nottingham City Council and its child protection partners should commission an independent, external evaluation of their practice concerning harmful sexual behaviour, including responses, prevention, assessment intervention and workforce development. An action plan should be set up to ensure that any recommendations are responded to in a timely manner and progress should be reported to City's Safeguarding Children Partnership.

As part of the wider cross-cutting learning from the 14 strands of the Inquiry, they will return to a number of issues that have emerged during this investigation, including but not limited to:

- Harmful sexual behaviour.
- The barriers to disclosure of sexual abuse by children, including those in care, and proactive steps to reduce those barriers.
- The approach to civil litigation, including the role of insurers.

The full report can be found [here](#).

5. **Next Steps**

- An action plan has been developed in response to the findings of the report and this will be shared with our safeguarding partners to ensure that they are committed to delivering the required improvements for Nottingham citizens.

- We continue to work in partnership with Nottinghamshire Police to actively support the ongoing criminal investigations, help to identify perpetrators and whenever possible, bring them to justice. We also work in partnership with Nottinghamshire County Council to progress Civil Claims and with Nottinghamshire CCG to help victims access the support they need.
- We continue to work with survivors of historical child sexual abuse, helping them access appropriate support. To help ensure that all partners are commissioning the right support the OPCC and NHS England have commissioned a comprehensive child sexual abuse/sexual violence economic, health and social needs assessment for Nottinghamshire.

Lime Culture CIC, a national sexual violence training and consultancy organisation with a strong track record of victim and survivor engagement is undertaking this work which includes a series of focus groups with victims and survivors and separately with professionals who are working with survivors. The resultant needs assessment will provide all commissioners in Nottinghamshire, including the City Council, with a solid evidence base for future support services and we shall use this to ensure that we and our partners continue to commission and provide the right support for our survivors.

- The safety and wellbeing of children and young people in the care of the City is and always will be our highest priority.

Alison Michalska
Corporate Director - Children and Adults