

Mike Nesbitt MLA
Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Room 435 Parliament Buildings
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Our Ref: 12/PD/PLM/065

Dear Chair

Thank you for your request to submit information to the Committee's Inquiry into the Historical Institutional Abuse Bill.

The establishment of the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry is not only of great importance to those who have experienced institutional abuse and their families but to Northern Ireland as a whole and I welcome the Committee's careful consideration of the legislation.

This response is not intended to be comprehensive but instead highlights my primary concern that, as expressed in my meetings and correspondence with the Department, the Inquiry process ensures that lessons about failures and weaknesses in the protection of children are identified and examined in the context of current safeguarding arrangements. It is important to recognise that the findings of inquiries conducted in other jurisdictions, such as the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse in the Republic of Ireland and the Historical Abuse Systemic Review in Scotland, have had significant implications for contemporary safeguarding arrangements for children and young people. This has included reviewing the effectiveness of legal and other arrangements and informing policy and practice developments.

The Inquiry process in Northern Ireland must give due regard to learning from the past in order to both properly address historic wrongs and ensure that findings strengthen our arrangements to protect children. It is disappointing that this has not been articulated in the Terms of Reference or the Bill and the Committee may wish to consider this further during its scrutiny of the legislation. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.



Yours sincerely

Patricia

Patricia Lewsley-Mooney
Commissioner for Children and Young People
Encs