

Overview of the background to the Inquiry and the Cataloguing process underway at Jersey Archive

The Independent Jersey Care Inquiry was established to assess failings in the Island's care system after 1945, and to find answers for those who were abused during their childhoods.

The States of Jersey Police's investigation into historical child emotional, physical, and sexual abuse taking place within Jersey institutions, known as Operation Rectangle, ran from 2007 to 2010.

Between September 2007 and December 2010, Operation Rectangle reported and recorded a total of 553 alleged offences, with 315 of those offences reported to have been committed at Haut de la Garenne. 192 victims, and 151 named offenders, were identified by Police; 8 individuals were prosecuted for 145 offences; convictions were secured of 7 of the 8 individuals prosecuted.

Following the conclusion of Operation Rectangle, Chief Minister Terry Le Sueur formally apologised to those who had suffered abuse in the States of Jersey's residential care system, in a statement dated 2010. Chief Minister Le Sueur acknowledged that the care system had failed some children seriously.

Chief Minister Terry Le Sueur promised to consider with the Council of Ministers whether further investigation by a Committee of Inquiry was required.

The Council of Ministers was requested, as of 2 March 2011, by the States Assembly, to establish a Committee of Inquiry to investigate unresolved matters relating to historical abuse in Jersey.

The matters related to:

1. Measures taken to address inappropriate behaviour from staff when discovered, whether those measures were sufficient, and other measures that could have been taken.
2. Whether those in authority at political and officer level dealt with problems brought to their attention
3. Mechanisms in operation to allow children to report their concerns in safety, and the action taken when and if concerns were voiced
4. Whether the approach taken when deciding on which cases to prosecute was consistent and impartial and free from political influence or interference at any level.

15 Terms of Reference for Committee of Inquiry's investigation into historical child abuse in Jersey were agreed by the States Assembly on 6 March 2013. Through the Inquiry, victims and others would be provided with opportunities to recount their own experiences in order to establish how establishments caring for children were managed, and the comparison of the management of establishments to the norms of the time.

The Panel appointed to the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry were chairwoman Frances Oldham QC, Alyson Leslie, and Professor Sandy Cameron. The Panel took their oath of office before the Bailiff of Jersey, Sir Michael Birt, on 10 December 2013.

Independent Jersey Care Inquiry hearings were held between July 2014 and June 2016. The hearings mainly took place in public, with evidence also heard by the Panel in private sessions when appropriate.

Three phases were covered during the hearings, with each phase encompassing different elements of inquiry.

During Phase 1, evidence was heard from former residents of care homes and foster parents as part of Phase 1a, from staff and others working in the care sector and from alleged abusers as part of Phase 1b, and from those charged with political or other oversight of children's homes and fostering services during the period as part of Phase 1bb.

During Phase 2 evidence was heard relating to policing investigations of abuse, and decisions on prosecution.

Phase 3 comprised of consultations and discussions about the future of child care services in Jersey. Evidence was heard relating to former residents of children's homes and foster care as part of Phase 3a, relating to the consideration of expert evidence and meetings experts in child care policy as part of Phase 3b, relating to public consultations and contributions invited from the people of Jersey regarding Jersey's ability to deliver a high-quality system of care for children as part of Phase 3c, relating to consultations with stakeholders from different sectors of Jersey and participations from contributors to previous phases of the Inquiry as part of Phase 3d, and counsel evidence and submissions from Interested Parties as part of Phase 3e.

The Inquiry officially concluded with the publication of their Final Report on 3 July 2017, and the publication of 8 recommendations relating to future of child care in Jersey, the Inquiry's findings and legacy.

As part of those recommendations, the Inquiry intended to make arrangements for the archiving and storage of material provided to and produced as a result of the Inquiry.

Redacted material was transferred to Jersey Archive in November 2017, whilst unredacted material is currently stored off-island.

In January 2017, staff at Jersey Archive began the ongoing process of cataloguing the redacted material transferred to them by the Inquiry. As staff catalogue material, more evidence will appear upon Jersey Archive's online catalogue. This evidence is freely available to read. It is not necessary to hold a Jersey Archive Reader's card or a subscription to the Jersey Archive online catalogue in order to view material transferred to the Jersey Archive by the Inquiry.