

**STATEMENT TO BE MADE BY THE CHIEF MINISTER
ON TUESDAY 4TH JULY 2017**

Independent Jersey Care Inquiry Report

Yesterday the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry published its findings following a three year investigation during which it heard from hundreds of people.

The report from this Inquiry, which has given a voice to those who have suffered abuse, reveals the true extent to which Jersey institutions have failed our children and their families.

The Inquiry is a powerful reminder of the devastating consequences of child abuse. These revelations sadden and shock us all. Like many of you, I feel deep sorrow on behalf of those who were abused - they have been through so much.

We – as members of this Assembly - must face the truth. We must ensure that this never, ever happens again.

Whilst the Inquiry report is painful to read, we must do so. It allows us to better understand the pain and hurt experienced by children. It sets out what we must do to provide the greatest level of safety and protection for our children in the future; in order that they flourish.

I believe that we should look to implement all the Inquiry's eight core recommendations; but these are decisions we will need to take together.

Before I go into more detail about some of these recommendations, I would like to reflect on the events that have led up to this moment.

In December 2010, the Island's then Chief Minister made a formal apology to all those who suffered abuse in Jersey's residential care system. It followed an investigation by the States of Jersey Police, known as Operation Rectangle.

Between September 2007 and December 2010, 533 alleged offences were reported to Operation Rectangle. Of these, 315 were reported to have been committed at Haut de la Garenne Children's Home. Eight people were prosecuted for 145 offences and seven convictions were secured. The Police investigation identified 192 victims.

In March 2011, this Assembly formally requested that a committee was established to investigate issues surrounding historical child abuse.

As a result, an Independent Inquiry was set up to find out what went wrong in the Island's care system from the Second World War up to the present day.

The Independent Jersey Care Inquiry and its terms of reference were established under Standing Order 146 in March 2013. In December 2013, members appointed to the Inquiry Panel – led by Frances Oldham QC as Chair – took their oaths of office.

The Inquiry began hearing evidence in April 2014 and - by June 2016 - had heard from hundreds of people.

The Inquiry acted with full independence. It worked to establish the truth about what happened in our institutions; how abuse of children remained hidden for so long; and what happened when concerns were raised.

Importantly, the Inquiry considered what we need to do in order to improve the current system of residential and foster care services in Jersey.

Alongside the work of the Inquiry, the States of Jersey Police have been conducting Operation Whistle, which was set up in June 2015 to address historical child abuse allegations.

Operation Whistle formally closed at the end of 2016, by which time 96 allegations had been received. Of the 48 suspects, 22 have been arrested or interviewed by police, seven charged, and four convicted. Two suspects are currently pending trial, and there are 13 live investigations ongoing. The States of Jersey Police will continue to investigate all allegations of abuse - whether historical or current - thoroughly and sensitively.

And, since yesterday's publication, two other people have come forward to report the abuse they suffered.

There is full commitment to bringing offenders to justice and to holding to account individuals and institutions for past failings.

We, as an Assembly, must also hold ourselves to account for putting in place in the measures needed to protect children in future.

Subject to this Assembly agreeing the necessary legislation, we will appoint a new Independent Children's Commissioner, to champion the rights of all children and young people.

We will accelerate the modernisation of our children's legislation and the delivery of a Children's Plan, as recommended by the Inquiry. We can do so as a result of decision already taken by the Assembly to invest money into initiatives that support vulnerable children.

In addition, I met yesterday with representatives of some of the Care Leavers. They have kindly agreed to work with us to consider how best to deliver the recommendations that relate to a permanent memorial and the potential demolition of Haut de la Garenne.

It will take some time to fully analyse the details that underpins the Inquiry's core recommendations. As an Assembly, we will start this process on Thursday and, as already stated, I plan to bring a detailed response forward in October this year.

Alongside consideration and delivery of the Inquiry's recommendations, we must also continue to deliver improvements already underway. In recent years - since the Inquiry commenced - we have invested in services and systems that help keep children safe. We have;

- made additional resources available;
- embarked on a major programme of service improvement; and,
- greatly enhanced our ability to work together across different services.

We will, however, need to continue to put new resource into protecting the most vulnerable in our society. But, if children are safer as a result, the cost of this Inquiry and the costs associated with implementing its recommendations, will be worth every penny.

I know that yesterday, and days to come, will be difficult for all those who suffered abuse.

To those who came forward to have their voice heard, I would like to say: “thank you”.

We apologise to you for the shocking failure of care you experienced as children. At a time when you should have been cared for and protected, you were subject to abuse and hurt. Your stories will not be forgotten. Children will be safer as a result of your testimony.

I would also like to thank all those who worked to produce this report; in particular the Inquiry’s Chair, Frances Oldham QC, and panellists Sandy Cameron and Alyson Leslie.

The report’s recommendations are wide ranging and will require the full commitment of everyone involved if they are to be implemented speedily. We will need to be persistent and tenacious. We must invest and we must be prepared to challenge ourselves in order to create a new culture. One that is truly open and transparent, and which engenders trust.

It must be our shared goal to deliver lasting change.

I would like to assure the people of Jersey that we will work together to ensure the future safety of all our children. We need to do better - and we will. This Inquiry will help us do so.