



It's time to be
heard



 INDEPENDENT INQUIRY
CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

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Introduction



“The Truth Project is a vital part of the Inquiry’s work. We want to hear from victims and survivors of child sexual abuse, understand your experiences and learn from you. This input will help us make meaningful recommendations to help prevent sexual abuse in the future. I would encourage you to contact the Truth Project and talk to us. We will listen to you and treat you with respect. What you tell us will help protect future generations.”

Drusilla Sharpling CBE
Inquiry Panel member

Thank you for your interest in the Truth Project

The Truth Project, part of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, is an opportunity for victims and survivors to attend a confidential session to describe your experiences and how institutions failed to protect you. You can also make suggestions to help prevent abuse in the future. The Truth Project was designed in discussion with victims and survivors and is held in a supportive environment that puts your needs first. Anything said in a private session is free from judgement and questioning. Information from these sessions will be used to shape the Inquiry's recommendations.

Getting in touch to participate in the Truth Project may be a big decision. For some Truth Project participants, sharing accounts of child sexual abuse can be difficult and distressing. You will be offered support before, during and after you share your experience with the Truth Project.

If you think you're ready to share with us, you can contact us in any way that suits you:

- Fill in our online form at **www.truthproject.org.uk**
- Call us on **0800 917 1000**
(lines open Monday to Friday 8am-8pm, Saturdays 10am-12pm)
- Email **share@truthproject.org.uk**
- Write to us at **Freepost IICSA INDEPENDENT INQUIRY**

What's involved

Step 1

Find out if the Truth Project's right for you.

This doesn't commit you to anything – you can leave the process at any time.



Step 2

We'll get in touch and arrange your private session or help you to share your experience with us in writing at a time that suits you.



Step 3

Share your experience in writing or in a comfortable and confidential environment.
Share as much or as little as you like.



Step 4

If you agree, we turn the information you give us into an anonymised summary, but your personal details won't be published.

Step 1

Find out if the Truth Project's right for you



If you're ready to share your experience with the Truth Project, either in person or in writing, please contact us online or by phone, email or post.

This doesn't commit you to anything and you can leave the process at any time. The Truth Project website includes a 'Your Decision' section that can help you decide if you're ready.

If you use our online form or call us, we will ask you a few questions about your age at the time of the abuse and where it happened.

You'll then be asked to provide your preferred contact information, so we can get in touch to find out more about you and how you came to hear about the Truth Project.

Step 2

We'll get in touch

We'll contact you as soon as possible to arrange how and where you'd like to share your experience. We have a number of places across England and Wales for private sessions, and you can choose which one you'd like to visit. Alternatively, if you wish to share your experience in writing, we will provide you with the information you need to enable you to do so.

You can change your mind

You're free to change your mind about participating in the Truth Project, and you can leave the process at any time. If you've shared your experience but then decide you don't want us to use your information to support the Inquiry, just let us know.

“I would like to thank the panel for the professional, kind and understanding manner in which they dealt with my care.”

Truth Project participant

Step 3

Share your experience

You can share your experience with us in a 60 to 90 minute private session or in writing.

Private session

If you would like to share your experience in person, we'll arrange the time and place with you and help with practical arrangements such as transport and hotel bookings. If you would like to bring a friend or relative with you we can make arrangements for them too. If you'd prefer to share your experience in writing, we'll explain how you can do this instead.

Unless you've asked us not to, a support worker will contact you around four weeks before your private session to go through what the session will be like and answer any questions. They'll also ask how we can provide the best possible environment for you on the day, for example, if you have any particular needs. If you'd like more help and support in the run up to the session you can have several phone calls with your support worker, and they can attend the session with you if you want them to.

If you choose not to use our support service, you will still meet a support worker on the day who will be available to provide support as needed. They'll make sure you're comfortable and confirm you're the person we're expecting. If you gave your support worker details of any particular needs you have before your session, this will have been discussed with the facilitator, so you don't need to worry about the set up of your session.

You'll then be introduced to the assistant facilitator who will show you to the room where your private session will take place. The room is casual, private and arranged to allow an informal, relaxed conversation. The private meeting rooms have been designed to look the same at every centre.

The facilitator will then ask you to talk about your experience. They might ask you some questions, or ask you to explain certain points to make sure they understand everything correctly. The conversation will be informal, and not like an interview, so you can discuss as much or as little as you like, and take a break or stop whenever you want to. If you agree, we'll digitally record your information so that we can produce a written summary.

Where the private session will take place

Your private session can take place at one of a number of locations across England and Wales and you can choose from any of the available locations. Once you get in touch, we will provide you with the options of where and when the session can be arranged. All the locations, which are not advertised publicly, are easily accessible by road and rail.

We'll send you a map and a photo of your chosen location in plenty of time before your appointment with us. You'll also have a phone number to call if you have any difficulties on the day.

When the private session will happen

The sessions happen Tuesday to Friday, and we'll contact you to arrange an appointment that's convenient for you. This way you'll have plenty of time to prepare for the session, with the help of a support worker, if you want.

Sharing your experience in writing

If you choose to share your experience in writing and want further information on how to do this you can contact us by phone, email or post. Our contact details are at the back of this booklet.



“This is a supportive, sensitive, well thought through experience. I was able to say in words what I have never been able to say in 45 years.”

Truth Project participant

Step 4

We take account of your experience

Your participation in the Truth Project will help the Inquiry make recommendations to government and organisations on how to improve child protection in organisations and institutions across England and Wales. Unless you'd prefer us not to, we'll use the information from your experience to better understand child sexual abuse and help protect children in the future.

If you agree, we'd like to turn the information you give us into an anonymised summary. Your personal details won't be published and we'll make sure nobody is able to work out who you are from the information we include. You can change your mind about how you'll allow us to use your information at any point until the report is published. Just let us know by phoning, emailing or writing to us using the contact information given at the start of this booklet.

Available support

Support available before the session

A dedicated support worker will contact you for the first time four weeks before your session and offer emotional support throughout the process of sharing your experience.

Before the session, your support worker will talk to you about what to expect. They will answer any questions you may have and will be there to help you prepare. The support worker will also ask you some questions about your situation and your wellbeing and help create a support plan for the session and the days afterwards.

Support available on the day of the session

If you choose not to use our support services you will still be greeted by a support worker on the day of your session. The support worker's role is to help to look after your wellbeing and make sure you are comfortable and ready to share your experience before the session starts. They will talk with you about anything that is helpful to share with the facilitator and assistant facilitator that will help them to be sensitive to what you need. You are welcome to bring your own support and they can be with you throughout the whole process – including in the session.

Follow-up support

Immediately after the session your support worker will check in with you about how you're feeling. They will be able to tell you about support services in your local area that may be helpful to you.

The support worker will then arrange a date and time to contact you, normally about two days after your session, to check how you are feeling and answer any questions you might have.

You will then be offered a support call two weeks later and at that point the support service comes to an end.

If you originally said no to support, you can change your mind at any point and we will make sure support is still available to you on the day and afterwards with the follow-up calls.

The support is time-limited and focused and although we can help support you throughout your Truth Project experience, we are unable to make referrals, provide therapy or help with long term recovery.

There are other organisations that may be able to help and we can signpost you to them. Visit www.truthproject.org.uk/help-and-support for links to helplines and other organisations that can help you find the support that's right for you.

“It is such a relief to go to sleep at night knowing that someone, somewhere is doing something to try to ensure a safer future for vulnerable children.”

Truth Project participant

“The support given to help me feel comfortable and in control was outstanding; nothing was too much trouble and my welfare was paramount at all times. I felt listened to, heard and my opinions and story valued at all times. I actually learnt things about myself too. This was a meaningful process and I am so glad I did it.”

Truth Project participant

Privacy and police involvement

We understand that you might be concerned about your privacy and what will happen to the information you give to us. You don't have to give us any identifying information if you don't want to. All we need to know is what you would like us to call you and how we can contact you.

If you do choose to share personal information with us, we take your privacy very seriously. Our Terms of Reference require us to ensure that all personal and sensitive information is safely stored and is shared only with those who need to see it. We have secure systems in place to ensure this happens. We also have a legal ruling in force (called a Restriction Order), which prevents anyone from making public the identity of people who've shared their experience with the Inquiry. When the Inquiry is finished, all your information will be securely destroyed.

The Inquiry must pass all allegations of child abuse to the police. This includes those that have been reported before or where perpetrators are deceased or convicted. We give the police a summary of the allegation of child abuse, for example what happened, where and when it happened and who the alleged perpetrators were, but do not share other details of your experience.

We will only pass on your name and contact details if you want us to, unless we believe there is a child protection concern or someone is at risk of serious harm. In that case we will pass your details to the police or another service if you have given them to us.

The Inquiry might receive a request to disclose the information we hold if you are involved in criminal proceedings relating to what you share with us. For example, information might be requested by either the prosecution or defence teams where an individual is being prosecuted for child sexual abuse. We will only pass this information on without your consent, if we are ordered by a court to do so.

Frequently asked questions

Can I change my mind if I previously said I don't need support?

Yes, a support worker will still be available on the day of the session if you need them. You're also free to change your mind about receiving follow-up phone calls from the support worker. Simply phone or email us to let us know.

Can I bring someone with me?

Yes, you can bring up to two people with you. They can either join the session or wait outside the room. You can discuss this with your support worker, and you can also change your mind on the day if you wish.

“Best thing I have done. Gave me a voice and allowed me to tell about my experience in a safe, understanding environment.”

Truth Project participant

Will the Truth Project cost me anything?

The Truth Project is completely free. When you decide to get involved, you can choose between meeting in person or sharing your experience in writing. If you choose to meet in person we will cover travel, accommodation and reasonable out of pocket expenses.

Can I bring documents with me?

Yes, if you feel documents will help us to better understand your experience, please send photocopies in advance so we can read them. We'd rather you didn't send originals, but if you have to, please send them by recorded delivery. You can post them to **FREEPOST IICSA INDEPENDENT INQUIRY** or you can email them to us at **contact@iicsa.org.uk**

Will the police contact me?

If you agree to us passing your contact details to the police, a local force may contact you to discuss the allegations of child abuse. The Inquiry cannot guarantee which police force this may be. You can tell us how you would like the police to contact you and we will pass this on, for example email, telephone, any preferred days/times or other preferences. As the Inquiry is independent of the police, we cannot guarantee if, when or how the police may contact you.

Will sharing my experience lead to an investigation?

Sharing your experience at the Truth Project is not part of a legal process and does not involve an investigation of your case by the Inquiry. If you agree to us passing your contact details to the police, this could result in further action or investigation by the police. The Inquiry is independent and has no involvement in any action taken by the police.

How can you continue to get involved?

There are a number of ways outside of the Truth Project for you to work with us to help protect children from sexual abuse. We have a Victims and Survivors Forum where you can sign up to receive the latest updates and events. We also welcome your feedback to improve our website and campaign. Find out more about our Victims and Survivors Forum on our website: **www.iicsa.org.uk/victims-and-survivors/attend-forum**

We hold and manage your data in accordance with data protection legislation. If you would like to know more, please visit our website or contact the Inquiry's Data Protection Officer on **dpo@iicsa.org.uk**; **020 3789 2136**.

Thank you

We know it's not easy to share experiences of child sexual abuse. By sharing with us, you will greatly contribute to the work of the Inquiry. It's very important to us to hear from you, so your support also assists us in making recommendations to protect children, improve laws, policies and practices, and respond to institutional failures.

We hope we've covered all the important issues in this booklet, but if you would like more information please don't hesitate to call, email or write to us:

- **0800 917 1000**
(lines open Monday to Friday 8am-8pm, Saturdays 10am-12pm)
- **share@truthproject.org.uk**
- **Freepost IICSA INDEPENDENT INQUIRY**

Alternatively, you can find out more at **www.truthproject.org.uk**

“After 37 years of silence and self blame, I found the courage to tell. I commend the Truth Project to all victims as our opportunity to give our version of events through a process that is safe and dignified. Go for it!”

Truth Project participant



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For further information, please visit:
www.truthproject.org.uk