

Protecting Children and the Power of Voice in the Search for Justice: what we heard from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in England and Wales

**Tuesday 28 March, 9:30-11:00
Microsoft Teams | Free**



Claire Burns:

Good morning, everybody, that's half past nine on the dot. So I think we're just going to start so good morning and a huge welcome to everyone. I am Claire Burns, the Director of CELCIS, and I'm so grateful for the huge number of people who have made the time to attend today's seminar in what I know are hugely busy schedules that everybody got. But I think it a real recognition of people's commitment to this really critical area of work. So I can see a lot of familiar faces, many of them who have actually worked at CELCIS at one point, I recognise a few people as well, so great to have you all here. This is the first of our new CELCIS Emerging Insights series. And as you saw from the opening, this is Protecting Children and the Power of Voice and the Search for Justice: what we've heard from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) in England and Wales. And so this is the first of a number of webinars that will be offering a space to consider what are some of the critical issues in relation to child protection for us here in Scotland and beyond. And I think we all recognise and support the emphasis and policy on early health and family support, but we also know the task of keeping children safe and free from harm remains a critical duty and responsibility of us all. And one where we always need to be open to hearing about emerging evidence, emerging risks and emerging issues. And I think that's really what we're offering today. And it's in this context, we are offering a space for those with responsibility for protection and care to think, learn and engage together. So, you know, I'm really hoping that we'll be able to offer that for you today. And we could not be starting the series with a more important or impactful subject matter than the focus of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in England and Wales. And we're honoured and privileged to be able to hear today from the chair, Professor

Alexis Jay, the Secretary of the Inquiry, John O'Brien, and I think we're hoping to be joined by the ethnic minority ambassador to the Inquiry Sabah Kaiser, I think Sabah might not be with us, but she's hoping to be with us today. And I think Alexis, if I am right that today, I believe, is officially the last day of the Inquiry, or thereabout. So we are especially thankful for Alexis, Sabah and John to be joining us today, and I'll reintroduce them again, in a moment, you'll get a chance to hear from them. You'll imagine that today it's really important that, given the subject matter, we are really concerned that people know that if there's a wellbeing issue there are places they can go to get support, there are things that they can do. So trauma can affect us all at any point. And it can take us by surprise as well when we're discussing these subject matters. So it might be upsetting or potentially triggering for you. And if that's the case, feel free to put your camera off, feel free to take some time out during the webinar and afterwards. You'll also see that there's some information on organisations that can help such as the Samaritans and Breathing Space. And that was all in your joining instructions. So please do what you need to do during this this time to support your own wellbeing. Some housekeeping before we start quite quickly, because I know you're really keen to hear from the speakers, we've got a large number of attendees, for this webinars to get Mic will automatically be turned off as well as the chat function. That doesn't mean you can't contribute. We'll be using the Microsoft team's Q&A function to collect questions. So please feel free to contribute your questions using that function at any point. And a selection of these questions will come to me as chair and I'll ask the panel, I'll ask these to the panel as well. The session will also be recorded, and attendees can choose whether to have their camera on or off, as I've already said. So again, thinking about the focus of the seminar then today, it will look at Inquiry's findings, and what the Inquiry is findings mean for Child Protection now, by putting a spotlight on three themes in particular: the importance of putting the survivor voice at the heart of the inquiry, what emerged as learning about institutional behaviour across different non-familial settings. And again, I know that Alexis and others will want to go into more detail about that. And the path to key recommendations, including around mandatory reporting, which I know is something that's getting a particular focus in Scotland at the moment. So we will hear from each of our panel in turn and then I'll offer some reflections and questions when they're finished. And then we'll open it up to questions from the floor, so to speak. And that will be through the chat function. So to kick us off, I'm going to pass to John O'Brien and John has been the secretary to the Independent Inquiry since April 2015. And, John, I'm going to hand it over to you thanks.

John O'Brien:

Thank you for inviting me and Alexis along to talk today and it's great to see people joining in the hundreds, so great to be able to speak to everybody. So I'm going to talk to you particularly about the way that we made sure that survivors were involved in every aspect of the inquiry and how we did that. But I'm just going to take literally 40 seconds to put in context why that was so important. So this inquiry largely came about, because of two very specific things that happened in 2014. The first was the Jimmy Savile scandal

broke. And the second was this emerging scandal that time around a potential paedophile ring in Westminster. Both of those were accompanied by a large number of contacts from survivors saying that they had been abused within the context of those two investigations and the police actually stopped counting individual cases in Savile once they reach 1000 because that was sufficient for them to actually be able to make sure they can make the case against Savile. So that's really why we came about and it's why right from the very beginning, it was clearly obvious to us that you needed to have that so survivor voice embedded in our inquiry. So we did that in three ways. The first way is to have what we describe as a victim and survivors' consultative panel, which would be consistent throughout the life of the inquiry, would be eight people strong, and would be recruited with only two criteria in mind. The first, obviously, you must be a victim and survivor of child sexual abuse. And the second was that you must have had some experience of operating in some sort of corporate experience. That could be by being involved in a charity, by leading a survivor group, by having previous experience working in a large organisation. And the reason for that was that this was a paid role and it was designed to advise the chair and the panel as we went through the lifecycle of the inquiry on key aspects of survivor engagement, the survivor view on emerging themes, and helping the chair on the panel make sense of the evidence that came through from the formal evidence taking sessions. So this was recruited in the second half of 2015. Through fair and open competition, we appointed eight people at that point to these roles. And they really proved their worth, I think, throughout the lifecycle of the inquiry. So when I come to talk about the truth project in a moment, they're incredibly helpful in the logistics of that, things from advising how you would make contact with survivors to come through the Truth project, but also things like how do you create the right environment to encourage survivors to come forward. And that even involved details like the pictures on the walls, the lighting in the room, the colour of the paint on the walls, really giving us that detail that enabled us to make our other two arms of engagement with victims and survivors really successful. So that was the victims and survivors consultative panel, they formally stood down from that role on December the 31st, which was two months after our final report was published. Because at that point, they're role in advising the chair and the panel leading up to that final report was obviously over. And I know the chair will maybe touch on this, and Sabah will touch on this - just how useful they were in informing that process from start to finish. So that was the victims and survivors consultative panel. But perhaps a much bigger challenge for any inquiry, not just ours, is how do you involve victims and survivors in your inquiry to come forward and talk to you to give you information that's really crucial to understanding, in our case, the type of abuse that happened, where it happened, how it happened, what the failings were, in a way that works for them. Most victims and survivors did not want to come and give formal evidence in an open hearing, where they're easily identified, where it's a very formal process where you have to give evidence on oath. Most victims and survivors wanted to come and talk to us in confidence. Many of them hadn't told friends, family or work colleagues so they wanted to be in a place in a space where they felt safe, where they felt

that they weren't going to be seen by family members or friends or work colleagues. And that they needed a degree of support in order to be able to do that. So we labelled this the Truth Project. In its simplest form, it was a way for a victim and survivor to come and engage with the inquiry. They come and talk to a trained facilitator. The focus was on not asking a series of questions, the focus of the facilitator was in encouraging people to tell us as much or as little about their experience that they want to tell us, this is not a legal process. It was not an interrogation by inquiry staff. It was a way for survivors to come to us and say, this is what happened to me. This is why I think it happened to me. And we asked at the end, if they would be prepared to leave reflections on the sorts of things that they think would prevent that, what happened to them happening in the future, what things would have stopped that happening if they'd been in place at the time you were abused. At the end, by the end of the inquiry, almost six and a half thousand people had come and talk to us through the Truth Project. We ran it by opening regional offices up and down the country. So we had offices in Exeter, Liverpool, Darlington, London and Cardiff. And the idea was that most people would not need to travel more than 50 miles to get to an office, if that's the way they wanted to do it. It was very interesting that a significant proportion of the people that chose to come and talk to us in person did not go to their local office. And that was because of the reasons I alluded to earlier, they did not want to be seen or identified in their hometown or close to their hometown. So the vast majority people for instance, from north Wales chose to go to Liverpool. Many people from Cardiff or in the north of England chose to come to London. And the way we made that easy for them, we would pay for travel expenses, we'd allow them to bring a companion with them if they wanted. If they had disabilities, we would arrange for taxis to pick them up at home, take them to station, taxis at the other end. If they needed to stay overnight, we would facilitate that. I say that because it was a really important factor in getting so many people to come and talk to the Truth Project that you had to make it as easy as possible for them to make that physical journey. And alongside that you had to help them make the mental journey. So we had professional psychologists and a professional team embedded in the inquiry to help give that support. We were not a safeguarding organisation that's what the inquiry is about. But we made sure that as soon as somebody indicated that they want to come to that Truth Project, that they were engaged by a member of that team, that same member of the team would talk to them at least a fortnight before they came, they would be there on the day that they came to speak to us, they would have a follow up session with them after they'd been to us to make sure everything was okay that they hadn't been triggered, were there any concerns that they had, and they would keep that dialogue going for a couple of weeks after they'd been to the truth session, before we would indicate to them in their area what local support might be available to them if they still needed local support. We weren't able to do more than that, because I say we were not a safeguarding organisation. But the overwhelming feedback from people that came through the Truth Project is they really appreciated that level of support. And it did encourage, as I said, the by the end of it over six and a half thousand people to come and speak to us. The importance of the information that came

through the Truth Project in helping the chair and the panel come to those final conclusions can't really be overestimated. There was so much information in there that corroborated and added to the amount of evidence that came through those open hearing sessions. So that was the Truth Project. And the final way that we engaged with survivors is we had what we call a survivor forum. And it started off as an in person forum, the only criteria is that you were a victim and survivor, you signed up online, it was very easy. And the forum was a way for us to engage with victim survivors on topics that we wanted particular survivor feedback on. So for instance, we engaged with them on mandatory reporting, on access to records and a whole range of other topics. And we would initially pick a town in the UK, Manchester, we'd write to everybody who joined up in that area and invite them along. And we would engage with them on a topic that we knew that we needed that wider consultation on. And we would ask them a series of questions about the subject matter, whatever that was, and we would get their feedback. It proved to be hugely successful. And after the pandemic struck, we turned it into an online forum. By the end, there were over 1500 survivors signed up to that forum. And it provided us a specific feedback to the chair in the panel on subject matters that they'd heard during open evidence sessions, but which they wanted and needed a real survivor perspective on the detail of, as I say, access to records or mandatory reporting or other subject matter we might have consulted with them on. And that was a fairly brief run through because I know we've got a lot to get through today. But what I was trying to convey there is really what we did is so we had survivors embedded in the inquiry in the VSCP (Victims and Survivors Consultative Panel), given that consistent advice to the chair in the panel all the way through on the survivor context. We had the Truth Project, which was a way for survivors to engage with the inquiry in a safe and confident way, and to make sure that for survivors that didn't want to engage in a formal evidence session, they felt involved in the inquiry. And that was very much the feedback from that. And we had the forum, which is a way for those survivors who didn't want to give evidence, but did want to be involved in discussing very particular topics, to engage with the inquiry and make sure that they were able to make their voice heard on those subject matters, which interested them and they could dip in and out, you could take part in one of those discussions, some of them or all of them. So I'll finish there, because I think I've probably used my time. And I'm hoping that Sabah may have joined us now. I can't see her on the call. Is she as she joined us? Yes. And I'll hand over to Sabah.

Sabah Kaiser:

Thank you very much, John. So I would like to talk to you during my part about the work that I did within the inquiry. My name is Sabah Kaiser, I'm the ethnic minority ambassador to the inquiry. I'd like to talk about the role that I played within the inquiry, the work that I supported, and then of course, how that fed into Chair and panel, which finally came through into their recommendations. So as the ethnic minority ambassador to this inquiry, there was a lot of work to be done, I was given my role in February 2019. And I would say that I hit the ground running, my feet remained on the ground.

Throughout the time of this inquiry. My position was unique. John has just spoken about the Victim and Survivors Consultative Pane. As the ethnic minority ambassador, my position was unique in that I belonged to and worked across all departments in the inquiry. So I was given opportunities to review pieces of research that was done, I gave commentary on active work streams, and various projects that were, that were just getting started, and areas that were being discussed, where to go and what to do. So I gave a lot of commentary on that. And I also supported, very close to my heart, the delivery of the three engagement reports that our engagement team within the inquiry delivered. The free reports the engagement with children, and young people. So we listened to the present day experiences the contemporary views of young victims and survivors of child sexual abuse. We also did a report with the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning plus, victims and survivors, the inquiry heard that LGBTQ plus children face specific challenges that made them vulnerable to child sexual abuse. And then finally, the third project, the engagement with support services for ethnic minority communities. This inquiry did find that some victims and survivors from ethnic minority communities can also face specific challenges, and found it difficult to discuss or even disclose their experiences of child sexual abuse. I would very much like to give you a deep dive overview of each of these projects. But unfortunately, there is a lot to get through today. So I'm going to ask you to please access our website and download these projects. And please do have a read of them. Because they are, I would say, they are really insightful and rather brilliant pieces of work. Although I don't have time to deep dive into these three projects, I would like to talk to you about or pull out two key learnings which happened to be from the ethnic minority project. I'm going to pull these two key learnings out because John has just given you an overview of how throughout this inquiry, and I wholeheartedly agree with John, victims and survivors have been the lifeblood of this inquiry. It has run through everything that was done. From Truth to the forum that John has just spoken about out, the Victims and Survivors Consultative Panel, myself as ethnic minority ambassador, but with the engagement work that was done as well. So the two key learning that I would like to talk to you about today from the ethnic minority community project. One in particular, touched my heart and was something that was new for me. So we met with a lady called Helen who ran a Roma, Gypsy and Traveller organisation in Leeds. And I met her with my colleague Russell. And she spoke to us about the difference in conception - not conception sorry - the way childhood is viewed, conceived. Within these communities, she spoke about within the Traveller, Gypsy and Roma communities, that eight year old boys were not just expected, but many would be running their own businesses at the age of eight, because they were, at the age of eight, considered to be teenagers within those communities with a view to becoming adults, and married by the ages of 13 or 14, she spoke about girls from these communities that would go to school year seven, and they will present as children, but by the end of that year, those very girls would be visibly different, they would present highly sexualized, and again, they are now teenagers seen to be teenagers. And we have a view of also to be married by the ages of 13 or 14. Now that in itself was an experience for me, because I

did not know that. I thought I knew everything from my work that I've been doing for some 13 odd years. What the key learning was, and what really touched me and which is what I wanted to bring to you today. This lady Helen, who ran this organisation became very tearful, as she went on to explain the cycle of this childhood or perceived childhood that remained in place in the UK in our day and time. She spoke about a contract. She said, when Gypsy, Roma, Traveller communities settled in an area, they would have a visit, they would have a visit from the local police and the local council. And they will sit down with the leader of this community or the leaders of these communities. And they would be encouraged, asked and encouraged to sign a contract that stipulated certain responsibilities that they were expected to undertake, whilst they stayed within this particular area. And if they signed that contract, then their community so the people that you know, the children, the women would then have access to the health care and to social services, and to schools to benefits. And if they did not sign the contract, then those services, which is for everyone, would not be for them. And she spoke about this contract, debilitating she said, services like herself, in trying to form a bridge between the authorities and these communities, because quite rightly, she said, these communities would just stay separated, othered within their own areas, and they would not trust the outside authorities. And so therefore, these children would remain in this perceived cycle of, you know, the eight year old and the, and the 11 year old girl that I just spoke about. Listening to this lady speak about this experience. She doesn't give up. And she kept on a daily basis, accessing these communities, raising awareness, speaking to protective authorities, trying to get them to understand and explain to them the differences in their culture, but trying to bring people together, she found extremely difficult because she said that, in this day and age, racism and stereotypes regarding Roma, Gypsy and Traveller communities is was very prevalent, and to a certain degree, accepted by authorities in that protective authorities would not access these communities unless the contract was signed.

The second key learning from the ethnic minority project that that I wanted to bring to you today was about a meeting that was held in Coventry. John again earlier spoke about when setting up the Truth Project having the various headquarters around the country England and Wales, because many people survivors did not want to access the inquiry within their own hometowns because they didn't want to be identified. So, just keeping that in mind this meeting that we had in Coventry, we were told that many support services, if they had within their title, words such as abuse, or sexual or sex, accessing that building with the title in the front, could be extremely dangerous for people from Southeast Asian communities. Life threatening, indeed. And she was very serious. So this one particular support service that we had a meeting with was hidden behind another service, you would enter a building, and you would come to the reception desk, which was at the front. And the lady at the desk, was obviously aware of this other service that was further into this building, you would tell her that you wanted to visit with them, and then she would direct you. When I entered the building. I said to her that I'd like to visit this organisation. And I didn't clock that there was another person standing nearby. She

looked very uncomfortable. Thinking back now, I wish I had the foresight to, to think twice and perhaps wait. But I was so eager to meet this organisation, I said, please, can I go and meet with them and she looked very uncomfortable because this person heard the name of this organisation. She directed me to them, it was done a very long corridor, down some steps into the basement. And then we came into this organisation. I met with this awe inspiring, inspirational woman who, for the past seven years, tirelessly, diligently and did not give up - wanted to access women only groups within temples gurdwaras. And so temples for Hindus gurdwaras for the Sikh community, and mosques for the Muslim community. She wanted to access these women only groups, and raise awareness and talk to them about child sexual abuse. She said after some doing, she finally managed to get access to the women only groups within the Hindu temples, and also within the Sikh gurdwaras. However, she said, seven years it took her having countless meetings, giving assurances, meeting with Imams, and actually pleading with them, to please for her to have access to their women only groups. She said eventually, the leading Imam, after seven years of these kinds of meetings and discussions agreed that she could have access to the women only groups. If she were to change her terminology within her presentation. They wanted her to change the terms, child sexual abuse, to depression. I mean, this work, the ethnic minority study, the project that we delivered is 2020. We started work on it in 2019. And we are now in 2023. And it's still it still affects me that she was asked to change the terms child sexual abuse to depression. The lady said she agreed. She agreed, because she felt that there was going to be no other way she would gain access to these groups. She got access, but when she was in the room with these women only groups, she said she used the term child sexual abuse and was very open and honest and named each word and issue that she wanted to talk about. She said in one particular group, she had a group of women just over 50 in attendance, and over half disclosed experiences of child sexual abuse when they indeed were children themselves. And so, as I said at the beginning, an awe inspiring an absolutely inspirational woman. And the key learning taken from that was that she did not give up. She knew how important it was for her to access these groups. And no matter how hard it was for her what she had to agree to, she did not falter from her path. I could talk to you all for ages – forever - so much that I could tell you about the work as the ethnic minority ambassador, a role that I'm so honoured and privileged to have held, the work that that we had done for at the time of this inquiry. What I would like to leave you with is that, just as John has spoken about previously to me, this inquiry conducted a considerable breadth of work, which is out there in the public domain. The reports that I've just mentioned, 24 reports by the research team, 19 investigation reports, they demonstrated what we learned. They were all published and acknowledged by Chair and panel, and it informed their recommendations, which you will now hear about from our chair, Alexis Jay. Thank you very much for listening to me. Thank you.

Alexis Jay:

Thank you for your introduction, Sabah, and you quite correctly say that it's my job to tell you about our findings. And just very briefly to see that the remit of the inquiry was to consider how far the state and non-state institutions had failed in their duty of care to protect children. And what they've done to address these failings and whether what they've done was sufficient. And this covered England and Wales, the institutions included government departments, local authorities, charities, Parliament, the police, schools, including private and specialist education, religious organisations, in all their various forms, health services, and custodial institutions. So I will press on from here, you've heard a bit about the hugely important work of the Truth Project, and the engagement work that Sabah has described. What I'm going to tell you about now is what we found from examining this broad range of institutions, looking at large and complex pictures of child sexual abuse, to identify similarities, patterns, and any unique circumstances. And then our final report, we listed 113 common themes, behaviours and issues, which emerged in these investigations. I should say that nobody online here today needs to be told that child sexual abuse is not just a historical aberration, or a problem of the past. But the nature and scale of the abuse that we encountered during the inquiry was shocking, and deeply disturbing. And we concluded that it was a national epidemic. So turning first to the experiences and impact of child sexual abuse, it will not be surprising to many of you what we have found, but because we heard from so many victims and survivors, it is important to say that what we have been cannot be denied or dismissed by those who might argue and have argued against the extent of the problem. First, we found that victims and survivors were often abused from a young age 79% of Truth project participants were under the age of 11 when they were first sexually abused, it often lasted a long time. Amongst experiences that were describe to us, the average period during which sexual abuse took place was four years, and victims and survivors rarely described a single incident of abuse. And second, it was deeply troubling, though hardly surprising to find that sexual abuse was often preceded or accompanied by threats, violence, cruelty and neglect. Over half of the Truth project participants described experiencing at least one other form of abuse and neglect, in addition to sexual abuse. In institutional settings, in which child sexual abuse took place, from the Truth project, analysis of data, the first most prevalent setting was any religious - in its various forms, as I have said - religious organisations, then it was educational settings, and then it was care settings, such as children's homes or foster care. Going on to tell you that the majority of victims and survivors did not tell anyone that they were being sexually abused at the time. Fear of reprisals, guilt and shame meant that many victims and survivors felt unable to tell anyone what was happening to them. Children who were sexually abused in closed environments, for example, residential schools, and I now include private schools and specialist residential schools here, were captive victims with little scope for reporting abuse.

And even when children did disclose, many described receiving unsympathetic responses, just 5% of Truth project participants who disclosed abuse at the time, said that they were

believed. In some settings, compassion and support was extended to alleged perpetrators primarily, and not to their victims. And the average length of time before anyone disclosed as an adult from the cohort on the Truth project was 26 years. The impact of child sexual abuse of course, cannot be overstated. The effects of it both physical and emotional, can be profound and lifelong. 88 percent of participants in the Truth project described child sexual abuse as having had a negative impact on their mental health, and a third said it had an immediate or long term impact on their physical health. Some described a lack of trust in individuals and institutions, and said that stable, secure and long term relationships were hard to achieve. Education, employment and career prospects were frequently irreparably damaged. And children who were groomed through the use of alcohol or drugs often acquired a long term dependency or addiction, and some turned to crime to support their addiction. Feelings of shame and worthlessness drove many to what they described as reckless behaviours, and physical self-harm, including attempted suicide. Moving on now wants to say something about perpetrator behaviours. There were many similarities in the ways that perpetrators targeted and groomed their victims for sexual abuse. And that includes settings such as at children's home to the most exclusive public school. They often sexually abused multiple children and their offending spanned years, if not decades. Perpetrators created and exploited opportunities to abuse children. They took children away from their parents and carers on overnight trips. They befriended families in order to gain access to children and eliminate suspicion about their motives. Indeed, one person told us that they considered a dog collar was – and this is a quote - a licence to enter a child's bedroom in the secure knowledge that nobody was going to stop them because they were a person of the cloth. They sexually abused children under the guise of medical examinations when they had no medical training. And we found that from many decades ago in Rochdale, right up to the present day. Others masked their identity online in order to abuse. Some perpetrators threatened or committed violence to ensure compliance with sexual abuse. And many plied children with alcohol, drugs, gifts and affection to create a false impression that they were genuinely fond of the child and to gain their trust. All of this I'm describing to you resonates with my findings, when I completed the report on child sexual exploitation in Rotherham. Perpetrators identified vulnerable children who were less likely to have the capacity or capability to complain or protest. This included singling out children with disabilities, who in many instances were unable to communicate what had happened to them. This could include children who had no speech or who had any other form of hearing or sight loss or whatever. But they were specifically targeted precisely because of these disabilities. Others exploited children's poverty providing food and money in exchange for sexual acts. And some perpetrators from England and Wales deliberately targeted countries to visit where they believed they could sexually abuse children without detection or prosecution by the authorities. I am now going to speak about some of the organisational and institutional failures, which we identified. As I've said, we've looked in depth at 15 separate areas of institutional life. And the breadth of our work demonstrated many common failures and issues across a very diverse range of institutions and

organisational settings. Firstly, failures of leadership were evident throughout our work. Rarely were those in senior positions and the institutions we studied, held to account for the sexual abuse of children which occurred on their watch. We heard repeatedly how institutions prioritised their own reputations, and those of individuals within them above the protection of children. And deference was frequently shown to people of prominence, including by those whose job was to investigate these allegations. Even when they tried to investigate thoroughly as the police did on occasions, they were often told by their superiors to back off simply because of the status of the person who was named as an alleged perpetrator.

Vulnerable Children were left to the mercy of predators whose job it was to protect and nurture those same children. In some instances, known predator predators were moved on to other locations where they continued to abuse. And this was particularly noted in religious organisations, and indeed, in children's homes. There often appeared to be a lack of concern for children's welfare. Many institutions we examined, showed a brutal and callous disregard for the children they knew were being abused, blatantly ignoring any professional duty or moral responsibility for their safety. Power imbalances between staff and children were exploited in most settings. And this was particularly noted in custodial institutions. There was also a widespread failure by institutional staff to recognise that sexual contact between children and young people could be coercive and extremely harmful. And we also identified a number of concerns with Child Protection arrangements. Of course, historically, many institutions had inadequate measures in place to protect children from the risk of being sexually abused, but it was not all historic. Sometimes there were no procedures at all. And some institutions went to extreme lengths to avoid contact with the statutory agencies when allegations arose. There was in particular, in the range of religious institutions we looked at, often articulated a concern that nobody from their particular community could possibly behave in such a way towards children. And I should say that whilst the two main religions in England and Wales, of course were Anglicanism, and Roman Catholicism. Nevertheless, we looked separately at Child Protection arrangements and 38 other religions. So we had a fairly widespread sense of what exactly religious settings were doing in order to protect children. Moving on quickly, to the criminal justice system. There was an inadequate response by the police, the CPS and the courts that featured in many of our investigations and was frequently raised by victims and survivors. And we made a number of findings in respect of the criminal justice system. The time taken to investigate and prosecute child sexual abuse cases is a matter of considerable and continuing concern, and delays add to the harm caused by the abuse and can have a profound impact on complainants, some of whom simply give up and withdraw their support for the prosecution. Some measures have been introduced to minimise delays, but there is not yet clear evidence of their effectiveness. And constant requirements to repeat their accounts adds to the trauma for some victims.

I want to say something about the role of the internet in facilitating abuse because all of that goes to our conclusion of the nature of this being an epidemic. You'll all be aware of the severe and evolving threat posed by the internet, and the statistics are truly alarming. For example, during the first 2020 lockdown, there were over eight and a half million attempts by UK internet users to access Child Sexual Abuse imagery. And I should say that it is not a positive statistic that internet users in the UK are amongst the top three in the world for accessing indecent images of children, the other two being the United States and Canada. In the evidence provided to this inquiry it was clear that the internet has been widely used to distribute indecent images of children to groom and manipulate children to commit sexual acts, and to live stream the sexual abuse of children from around the world, which can be directed by the predator for very little money. And indeed, there was a shocking example in Scotland during the time of the inquiry that we could not use necessarily, as we were covering England and Wales, but it was a person in Ayrshire who had actually accessed live streaming to the parents of a child in the Philippines, a very young child where for very very little money indeed he could direct them as to how to abuse the child for his own gratification on a live stream. Offending on the dark web involves a level of depravity which is hard to comprehend, such as the rape and violent abuse of babies and toddlers. And of course, it is also possible to access a manual on the dark web, on how to groom children. So until this worldwide phenomenon is tackled by the industry itself, children will continue to be harmed. And I'm sure you'll agree that online service providers and social media platforms must take responsibility for the harms their actions and decisions cause. The Online Safety Bill which has already taken too long to be enacted, must now be urgently progressed. And I must also make the point that it was the inquiries conclusion that end-to-end encryption is - my words not in the report - is the enemy of child protection. Finally, I want to say something in this section about wider societal issues. The whole subject of child sexual abuse is mired in euphemism obfuscation, myths, and stereotypes. Society does not want to talk about child sexual abuse. And we heard from many victims and survivors that this contributed to them feeling unable to disclose sexual abuse, or it appeared to impact the response that they received when they did. Often, people were reluctant to accept that a child could possibly be sexually abused within their community, their family or their institution, as I referred to earlier. The inquiry sought to drive a change, raise awareness and encourage more open and informed conversations about child sexual abuse. And I know that many organisations are committed to doing this and to tackle what is now understood to be victim blaming language when you encounter it. In particular, we need to use the correct words to describe the actions of abusers, masturbation anal and oral rape, penetration by objects, these words are still not considered acceptable terms by many in public and private discourse. Every incidence of abuse is a crime and should not be minimised or dismissed as anything less or downplayed because descriptions of the abuse might cause offence. And that was a very quick run around on our findings. I want to say something in this last part of my presentation about recommendations. Our recommendations together form a package, of course and the first a set of reports that we produce following through

on the public hearings, as has already been said, in these 19 reports, we made 87 recommendations, many of which have been accepted and some have been acted upon fully. Three recommendations that we've made in the final report form the centrepiece of the inquiry's work that arose from our overview across the issues that we investigated. This was the introduction of mandatory reporting, the establishment of child protection authorities, one in England, one in Wales, and a national Redress Scheme.

On mandatory reporting, and as Claire has said, there is clearly some interest in Scotland in this matter, the inquiry repeatedly found that allegations and indicators of child sexual abuse were not reported by adults and institutions who ought to have reported them. As we detail in the report the introduction of mandatory reporting laws elsewhere indicates that these laws have the capacity to significantly improve statutory services' ability to target help and support to share victims of sexual abuse. But of course, we recognise the genuine concerns that some have about its introduction. In particular, some people may have concerns that mandatory reporting will unduly penalise professionals, or that it could overwhelm statutory agencies receiving reports, particularly if the laws are not designed and implemented with care. And we carefully considered these concerns in addition to our research and investigative work. We held two seminars, specifically on mandatory reporting to learn from the experiences of other jurisdictions throughout the world. And to consider the best approach for England and Wales. The model that we've recommended requires all those working with children in regulated activity, or who are in a position of trust to report known child sexual abuse. We consider this to include where a child or perpetrator discloses abuse, when a mandated reporter actually witnesses a child being sexually abused, or where they detect recognised indicators of child sexual abuse. This recommendation addresses an important point of principle - that it is absolutely unacceptable, that someone who works with children could know about the sexual abuse of a child, but fail to report it. We have made very clear that there should be no exceptions to this, including for religious reasons, such as the seal of confessional. We are aware that it must be introduced very carefully. So we've therefore not recommended a model as broad as is seen in some other jurisdictions. And it is important that the model does not require that concerns about a child at risk must legally be reported. We do not consider in the first instance that any broader duty should be introduced. Once it is bedded in then consideration can be given to whether it should be broadened. We did look at the patterns in other jurisdictions about the concern about being inundated with referrals. And the evidence quite fully suggests that whilst there might be an immediate spike in referrals, following the introduction of mandatory reporting that quickly settled down within a year to 15, 18 months, and in fact has resulted in far more real referrals of child sexual abuse being reported, which is the main objective in this that we want to achieve - that children get the help they need, when they need it. Now, I want to quickly say something more about the other two recommendations which are about child protection authorities. I won't go into this in great detail, because the situation is different in Scotland, but we have concluded there needed to be a greater priority and focus

politically and across society as a whole, on protecting children from sexual abuse. And there needed to be an organisation whose sole focus is on child protection. At the moment this is formulated through local safeguarding partnerships and certainly in England and there is a different setup and Wales. But nevertheless, the tendency has been to focus on the strategic issues concerned with safeguarding rather than the extremely complex and difficult work of child protection. And we fear that it is not getting, those specific aspects of work, is not getting the full attention it deserves. We're also concerned about the nature of leadership across agencies, which we think is still not good enough. So we have recommended that these child protection, authorities should secure a long term focus on child protection itself, rather than on the wider focus of child safeguarding, which indeed, is very important. We're not suggesting, of course that that should be removed. And it would be complemented by a separate recommendation that we need a cabinet status minister for children in England and insofar as it's possible to do in Wales. In relation to redress, of course, you know, that Scotland already has a Redress Scheme in place and this is operating, but we have said it's most important that a national Redress Scheme for England and Wales should be in place to provide compensation for child sexual abuse for those who've been let down by state and non-state institutions in the past. And we are very clear as were victims and survivors, that although the primary responsibility for this must be the state in its various forms, nevertheless, contributions should assertively be sought from non-state institutions, some of whom already contribute, but others don't. So we propose a fixed term scheme, with we hope straightforward processes to ensure as far as possible that victims and survivors have easy access to the help they need. We made a number of other recommendations, I won't go into them all here. But they should all be seen as a package of recommendations which complemented each other. So I think I'll stop there Claire, and we can move on to any questions.

Claire Burns:

Okay, thanks, Alexis. And just I think, just to start off by I'm sure, on behalf of everybody, just thanking yourself, Sabah and John for that, as like everybody else, I'm so struck by how you were all able to communicate such powerful messages and learning in such a short space of time and the number of the notes that I've got around that. So we've heard from you already about the commitment to voice and lived experience. I think Sabah, you refer to it as the lifeblood of the inquiry. And I think, again, like everybody else, I was just so struck, by the way, it was so intentional, the inclusive nature, the culturally sensitive, but the flexibility in terms of John, you refer to the physical and mental journey that was involved in that. And I suppose it's just to return to that to say, is there anything else, you feel you haven't had a chance to say about how the victims and survivors were supported before, during and after their engagement. So I think you've covered that very poignantly. But I just wondered if those other things that you wanted to say around that.

John O'Brien:

Thanks. I won't go into more detail on the support, I think, though, for me, the most shocking but also the most satisfying outcome from the Truth Project was the number of people that wrote in afterwards and said, how it had changed their lives, literally. And if you will give me three minutes, I'd just like to bring that to life with an example of a Truth session that I did. So this was a gentleman who when he came to see me, he was from north Wales. He was 82 when he came to the session. He had suffered abuse between the ages of six and 12, perpetrated by his local priest. This was in the mid 50s, so unusually, he had told his parents, they'd believed him, they'd reported it to the police. But because of the, when this happened, the priests wasn't moved, he was allowed to remain in post. The police didn't take any action. It was essentially the child's word against the priest's word. This gentleman had then got married at 18 had told his wife before he married her about his abuse. And he'd had three children. And he'd subsequently told all of his children about their abuse. And the point of outlining all that detail is he wrote to me two weeks after he'd been to his Truth session, he said, I thought you might like to know that I came to speak to you two weeks ago. And I had not left the house unaccompanied, in the whole 70 years between the age of 12, where my abuse stopped and coming to see you. So I was either accompanied by my parents, or latterly, by my wife, or even later by my children, all of whom knew about it. But the process of talking about it with you, and simply knowing that I was believed, made me able, for the first time today to leave my house on my own for the first time in 70 years. And that was a very extreme example, but it just brings to life how just coming along into an environment where you're comfortable and you are believed can actually change people's lives. And although that was an extreme example, there were many examples where people said it's enabled me to close a chapter, move on, they all use different words, but it enabled them to put it in perspective, I think, is the way that I would describe it and perhaps have less of an impact on their lives and it had up to that point. So you know, I would say as Sabah and Alexis have said, you cannot underestimate the power of making this part of the inquiry, not an add on to the inquiry, and building it in from the very beginning and really building that confidence with the survivor community.

Sabah Kaiser:

Yeah, and just to add, 6,339 victims and survivors gave their truth to Truth Project. 10% were from an ethnic minority community. If you think of 13% makeup, England and Wales 10% is just an amazing percentage. 13% identified as LGBT. So yeah, absolutely the Truth Project, this inquiry's commitment to hearing from victims and survivors was unique and untold. It was just brilliant.

Claire Burns:

Thank you, Sabah. Alexis, anything else you want to add to that?

Alexis Jay:

No, I absolutely endorse everything that's been said. I've omitted to mention that the oldest person who came forward to the Truth Project was 87, which is extraordinary. And we had a number of people in the older age group who did so. In terms of the support, Claire. I don't know, maybe, John, you would like to say something about the arrangements we made to support victims and survivors in this process? And indeed, in the wider issue of staff support as well.

John O'Brien:

So I explained how people taking part in the Truth Project were offered support. So essentially, as I say, we employed that support directly with trained psychologists and other specialists in the inquiry. We didn't buy it in. And so you would indicate online that you wanted to take part in a Truth Project. When a suitable date was identified, you would be contacted by a member of that team, they would talk through the date with you make sure it was suitable, they would talk through what you would expect on the day, how it would go, how you would get there, who would take you into the buildings so that nothing came as a surprise when people turned up. As I say, all the facilitators that took part in Truth sessions were trained and had themselves been in, they tended to be people like retired senior teachers, retired social workers, people that that were used to dealing with difficult situations. But it was also really important to the people coming through that they tell their story to somebody who they saw as having authority. But then that support on the day included, as I say, a debrief with the same psychologist afterwards. And then there were a number of phone calls in the subsequent 10 to 14 days to make sure that individual was okay. If there was nothing major identified, at that point, we signposted, because that was the extent of what we were able to do. But obviously, if any big issues were identified, then that support would continue for longer, until we're absolutely certain that person had dealt with any issues that were raised during the sessions. And we also recognised the impact that dealing with this subject day-in-day-out can have on staff, not just in the Truth sessions, but in the inquiry more widely. So again, that team were available to talk to staff, your staff could approach that team in confidence and talk through issues. If staff were working on a particular team and found it particularly traumatic, we would move them to other teams to try and enable them to continue within the inquiry. And we also had for staff that didn't want to use that in house mechanism, a contract with a proper professional support providing organisation that they could telephone and talk through in detail and indeed arrange to meet in person if that's what they wanted. So the whole ethos is with the inquiry is this can hit anybody at any time. And actually, if you're working with it on a daily basis, you don't have to have been a victim for it to affect you quite deeply. And it did affect a number of our staff very deeply. I'm actually quite proud to say that for those staff that came and decided they enjoyed the work, and there were some people that came and found it wasn't for them. But you tended to find that identified that very quickly and left very quickly, just how many people stayed right to the end. We had a very, very low turnover of staff. And the reason I'm

proud of that is because it's down to recognising that support that you need to provide to people and making sure that you don't take mental resilience as a given. We all need help with mental resilience we all need at times to offload what's built up. And so, you know, I hope I'm conveying that was the very ethos of, of how we built this inquiry really.

Sabah Kaiser:

Just to add a personal experience before I became the ethnic minority ambassador to the inquiry. I'm an expert by experience - a survivor. And I had given my truth to the Truth Project back in I think it was the end of 2017 or the beginning of 2018. And I was met with respect and kindness in that I felt empowered. I actually travelled you know, John spoke about survivors being able to give them the opportunity to travel 50 miles from their hometowns, I chose to travel four hours away from where I lived to, to speak with Truth project. I was met with respect and kindness and so that I felt empowered. and later became then in February 2019, the ethnic minority ambassador, and since then I have travelled the length and breadth of England and Wales, openly talking about my experience and raising awareness. So, yeah, thank you to this inquiry for the great work that it did.

Claire Burns:

Thanks Sabah. I think what we will all take away from that is just the commitment and sensitivity that went into that process. But I think just again, how lifelong the trauma and the impact has been, and if it's done well, it can be life changing for people. So I think that's certainly what I've got from it. And I'm sure other people will as well. To come to another part of what you were raising Alexis, maybe for you to kind of, to kick off the discussion, we really hear a lot about poignant moments during the inquiry, but things that might have changed your mind where you had a particular position that's been changed by what you've heard and what you've read from people. So I wonder Alexis, if you would maybe say a bit more. I know you have raised the issue around mandatory reporting, and we probably want to get a bit more. The other bit I am struck about and I'd like to hear a bit more than I know others are interested in this issue around child protection and safeguarding? And you were saying both is really required. So when did you see a bit about both the mandatory reporting on the safeguarding versus Child Protection element? Thank you.

Alexis Jay:

Yes, it's an interesting question Claire, because I was probably quite neutral about mandatory reporting at the start of the inquiry, but the overwhelming evidence and the power of the descriptions of how, as adults look back, and they had told people in authority, about what was happening to them in whatever way they found the courage to do so. And they thought something would happen, and then it didn't, and how betrayed they felt by that over decades, actually, and how that, that stayed with them. I just wanted to add something else that came up very frequently was how important, I know,

it's a bit of a cliché, but how a trauma informed approach is absolutely essential. Because we heard so often from victims and survivors that they couldn't predict what triggers there might be to the trauma that they had experienced as children, and there were a huge range of triggers, which they didn't know about until it happened. And then - this is what makes counselling and support quite difficult - because it's not like six sessions of CBT is going - to be helpful as it might be - that isn't going to fix necessarily the problems because they're not necessarily foreseeable or predictable. If for example, and these are real examples that people mentioned, the sound of church bells was one that was raised, people wearing specific colours was another. And they have no idea until they experience it, that that is a trigger. And that was very striking to me, as well, from the beginning, and I very quickly, it became entirely clear that mandatory reporting was necessary. Not just for what it did to help the children, which is the primary focus of it. But when we have the accounts from people of how in their innocence, they believed that there were trusted adults who were going to do something and it didn't happen. So your other question was about the safeguarding and child protection agenda? Yes. I mean, we don't tend to use the term safeguarding in Scotland, of course I know that, and we still retain Child Protection committees. It is very, it's tempting when groups of professionals get together to focus on the strategic as opposed to the strategic and the very, very skilled work of working with children and young people. We have a huge problem with under reporting of child sexual abuse. There's no arguments about this. Now, obviously we can't describe the extent of this because we don't know, but under identification and underreporting. is a very serious issue that needs a very purposeful focus on it, especially in engaging with children being able to understand their concerns, and to find the language, which was terribly important. I am aware of the amount of post qualifying training that is available, though, I'm not sure what's happened to it in this current climate of austerity. But I do hope it's still in place. And it keeps up with all of the new developments, and when I say new I don't mean positive of course, about online abuse, in particular how to do with that, county lines, a huge range of things. Put it this way, the predators are always further ahead of the professionals in this. And that's certainly not the fault of professionals. But they think of new and different and more awful ways of sexually abusing children. One general point I would make, which I made from, I suppose, the beginning of all this, and I do not have an answer to it. But nevertheless, it is we have never been able to establish why there is this drive, mostly from men, but not exclusively worldwide, global to want to sexually abuse children. This is well beyond the scope of our remit, of course, because it's a complex issue that would require a different form of reception that would have to be transnational, as well, because it's not there's not a simple answer to this. But I do think that this is a very important issue that somehow or other we need a better understanding of.

Claire Burns:

Thanks very much Alexis. John, Sabah is there anything that you want it to come in on, just on the back of what Alexis said?

John O'Brien:

I just had a poignant moment, I think, which was our very first investigation, which was the child migrants programme, which you know, was where children were essentially shipped off to what were described as the colonies at the time. I was I was working on safeguarding in the home office before I came here. So I thought I'd seen the way that perpetrators of abuse, managed to coerce and control people. But I'd see nothing until I heard and read about what had been done in order, not just to abuse those children, but to control those children when they arrived abroad. I mean, just the most dreadful ways of controlling them. And it was, it was exacerbated by the fact that when they were shipped off, there was no thought to how they were protected, or how things were reported. They were essentially sent to isolated communities, where abuse was allowed to happen, unhindered. And, as I say, I mean, the report contains a flavour of, of what was done. But for me, that really opened my eyes. You know, having worked in the home office for the best part of 10 years looking at this, you suddenly realise that you start as a novice when you when you actually start to dig below the surface.

Claire Burns:

Thank you for sharing that John. Sabah, I just wanted to check in with you if there was anything else on that question?

Sabah Kaiser:

I'm just sort of taken aback by what John has just said. It's really, it's really touched my heart. That's quite shocking and very poignant. With regards to mandatory reporting, I wholeheartedly support that recommendation. In fact, as a layperson, I was utterly shocked to find out that in this country, professionals do not - are not - obliged to report reports of child sexual abuse. So I was very grateful for that. Personally, very grateful for that recommendation.

Claire Burns:

So one, one final question from me, then we'll go to questions from the floor. And this is really around the online abuse part, so again, Alexis, if you maybe want to say - I think I have heard that statistic from you before a couple of weeks ago, but I think like everybody else, it's an absolutely shocking statistic to hear that about the first few weeks of the of lockdown. And, I think again, what I'm hearing from you is about seeing this is a global issue. It's about tech companies. It's about but what would you advise you've got many practitioners and leaders here who have got responsibility for Child Protection in Scotland. Where would you advise us to start paying attention to try and tackle some of us?

Alexis Jay:

That's a very big question Claire, and I'm certainly not tech savvy enough to know what the digital answer to that is, but there are there are certainly some interesting solutions. I would say one thing, and I think I said the Child Protection Leadership Group as well, we cannot reasonably expect the police to deal with every instance of indecent images. It's not possible. It's utterly overwhelming. And it's a horrible job as well, for those who are actually monitoring it. As with many other aspects of the subject matter, but certainly I referred in the previous meeting to this question about personal and relationship, education being hugely important, and careful, responsible use of the Internet, and the kind of guidance that needs to be given to parents and children about this. I don't know at the moment what the state of, for want of a better description, sex education is in Scotland, but we know quite a lot about children and young people's views of it, certainly in England and Wales, and again, from my previous experience in Rotherham it was the case.

And it perhaps hasn't quite got the right focus as yet, although the introduction of the some of the measures in England have moved on a bit, in that respect. However, it is disturbing that many children recently reported to be acquiring the knowledge of sex and sexual matters from pornography, accessed on the internet. And this is not a good state of affairs, given how misogynistic, a great deal of it is, and homophobic etc, etc. Nevertheless, I do think the experiences of children and understanding and acknowledging the issues there have been - everyone knows that relatively young, pre pubertal children are accessing all sorts of material on the internet at the moment, which should certainly not be regarded as a source of understanding the issues that could face them. It's fairly shocking. So I think there's some straight talking needs to be done about some of that. Beyond that, it absolutely must be a concerted multi agency effort, education, police, absolutely, and social work services that have to work together over these issues. But it is - there is so much of it that is dominated by the behaviours and attitudes of the tech companies. It's hard not to feel overwhelmed by some of it, but something must be done, people must not choose encryption over child protection, for example, which appears to be going to be the option that is that is available to people and the tech companies basically wash their hands of it. And if you if you want end to end encryption, then you get it. John and I heard recently from the National Crime Agency that the surveying they have done said people were kind of evenly split. That's not as everybody wants end to end encryption all the time. And they're very keen to promote the avoidance of this, but it's a very complex issue. John, I don't know if you want to say anything further about this.

John O'Brien:

Yeah. So I did quite a lot of this work on the proliferation of online harm in all sorts of aspects when I was in the home office, and I've really quite strong views on this. So there's some basic things we can all do. I mean, I think Alexis alluded to the need for cultural change, and you know, this culture - so, age verification needs to be taken much

more seriously. So that, you know, the children that access things too easily and are able to see things they shouldn't see. So you know, it should no longer be a tickbox. Banking apps do this really well, as an example. You cannot get into a banking app, it's almost impossible to get onto a banking app. If you cannot prove you're over 18. And if banks can do it, so can everybody else but there needs to be a willingness, but simple things like parents making sure all parental controls are switched on, on all the technology in their house. None of these are an answer, but they all start to pare down those children that find it really easy to access it. And we all know if you make things hard some people will fall away. But when we come to the tricky question of tech companies, look, the simple fact of the matter is that this is a business model that suits tech companies. End to end encryption, doesn't for a moment block any of the access to the data that tech companies need. So all the metadata that they need to target you with adverts and things are not affected by end to end encryption. And isn't that surprising. The technology exists for the tech companies to find a solution to end to end encryption that respects our basic privacy, but still allows crucial information to be given to law enforcement companies. But at the end of the day, if this was trading nuclear material over the internet, the tech companies would find a way to highlight that. So I would say everybody needs to start waking up to this and everybody needs to start saying really loudly. End to end encryption should not mean everything and anything is open and possible and accessible on the internet. That is not what end to end encryption started off. It is a way to make sure that reasonable things that reasonable people do are only accessed and accessible by them, it has been turned into something that works for the Internet companies, because if they can't see that illegal things are uploaded, they can't be sued for hosting them on their sites. And that is the sad truth of why Meta and all the other big companies are going down this route. It is very business efficient. And you know, if you want cultural change, society has to talk out about that. So I think we all need to be more self-aware about this. It is the tech companies fault, but we need to stop letting them get away with it. We need to start calling it out for what it is. And you know, telling our local MPs, telling our children, why it's so important that end to end encryption should not mean everything is open and fair game. And I'm sorry, that was a bit preachy. But I really believe that if we just rely on the goodwill of tech companies, end to end encryption will happen. It will become irreversible. And the ability of children to be groomed and to see all the things Alexis has alluded to on the internet will be impossible to spot.

Claire Burns:

And I think John, what you and Alexis are raising is that, you know, we don't have, the people in this room don't have all the levers, but we have some so how are we making sure that we're raising awareness? Have we been engaging with government officials, with our ministers, the cabinet secretaries, about this being, you know, one of the really big emerging risks. So I think you've really helped us with that. I am conscious of time and I'm just looking at the questions. Some people have asked questions about how we tackle the online issues. So we've covered some of that. There are two or three questions that

have come around. And this might be our final question we'll see how it goes. But, Alexis, you have already alluded to this, I think what people are saying is this culture of silence that surrounds child sexual abuse, how do we begin to impact on that. So if you want to answer, and again we'll here for John and Sabah as well, thank you.

Alexis Jay:

Thanks, Claire, this is a recurring theme throughout and we have certainly taken it very, very seriously. We need to ensure that the trusted adults are to be trusted for a start, that children and this is part of mandatory reporting, I've already referred to, that children must must feel free to be able to talk to individuals. Now the responsibility for that - the onus of this is absolutely not on the children. And we need to be very clear about that. It's everybody else's responsibility. And of course, we know about that particular principle in Scotland. But nevertheless, it is true because there had been a tendency to think that the burden, unwittingly I think, the burden for keeping themselves safe lay with children. Now clearly, it's important that they get all of the right information as we just talked about, but it is the adults' responsibility in institutional settings, to make sure that they have systems in place and processes in place and training amongst all of those people and that children know there is always somebody that they can trust, to talk to. The culture of silence again in general terms, is, of course, about it is a taboo subject, that people want to have sex with children. I mean, it's it is a taboo subject. And that taboo has to be broken. In the ways we've talked about, I mean, I mentioned this about using the correct language, that's hugely important. And it's also important to call out victim blaming language when it's used, so that we talk properly about it. This isn't crime, apart from anything else, it's immoral, but it's criminal, as well. And it needs to be treated as criminal. This is not just about what I heard described at one stage, as just a wee bit of adolescent fumbling. That is not the case. And of course, we do need to take very seriously all the issues around any kind of coercive abuse between children within the same age group. We have to be very open about these matters. This is not an easy subject matter, but we definitely need to look at that. But I mean, I remember when we initially did the work on some of the religious institutions, it wasn't even just them. But right at the beginning of all this, the word masturbation occurred in every report, I think every report we have written. But I couldn't believe it that there was only one media outlet who actually used it. The others didn't describe it for what it was. And all of that has to stop.

Claire Burns:

Thank you, Alexis, Sabah can I come to you. Is there anything else that you would want to pick up there from what Alexis said, on this question or anything else? This may be your last question, so anything that you wanted to you don't you haven't had a chance to say?

Sabah Kaiser:

Yes, thank you. Absolutely. Alexis has spoken about culture change. And in a previous presentation Alexis gave, she spoke about child sexual abuse being an epidemic. It absolutely is. And in order for us to finally tackle this crime, it needs to be seen as a crime, not dissimilar to any other crime that that we have. It's the way that this particular crime is still viewed within society that silences it. We do need a very strong, singular societal response to this matter if we're going to actually tackle it.

Claire Burns:

Thank you Sabah, again, really powerful. John, any final comments from yourself?

John O'Brien:

I mean, I only agree with that, if you look at what we did during the last real pandemic, we inoculated everybody, and this is the sort of approach that we need to change the culture, everybody needs to get involved. And I use the word inoculate, but we need to inoculate ourselves and our children. Alexis used the word taboo, and it is. I use my down the pub test. So you do hear people talking about domestic abuse and rape now and they are prepared to have a discussion about it. People go silent when you mentioned the words child sexual abuse, they are uncomfortable. And we've got to change that because it enabled perpetrators to cover it up.

Claire Burns:

Thank you, John. Thanks. So just to acknowledge we had a number of questions around the online abuse and number of questions around how we break that cycle of silence. There was another couple around the pandemic and one around inspection powers versus enforcement powers that I know Alexis would really like to have got to if she had had the opportunity. So apologies, but I may come back to that at some point Alexis. So in at 10:59, I think it's time for us to close

Sabah, John, Alexis, I don't know that I can do justice, to convey to you how powerful that was today, so thank you. Thank you. Thank you. And also to everybody - huge numbers of people who turned up today, which, again, it's people's interest, but I think also people's commitment to this subject area and for caring for children. And I know there's a few people with hands up, I'm really sorry, but we do really appreciate everybody who's turned up today and who's contributed. And I'd really love to thank the CELCIS staff who were involved in organising this because there's such a lot goes into to organising it so a huge thanks to those people. So again, final thanks Alexis to you, John, and Sabah.

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