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Henry Downey
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24 August 2017

Dear Henry

Thank you for your letter of 4th July sent to the Secretary of State concerning the motion recently passed by Belfast City Council in relation to the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry. I am responding on the Secretary of State's behalf.

You may be aware, the Secretary of State recently met with a cross section of historical institutional child abuse victims from SAVIA, Rosetta Trust, and Survivors North West. The Secretary of State was very moved by what the victims described to him, and he was very clear that the UK Government condemns any form of abuse of children, and any tolerance by people in positions of authority of such activity by others is abhorrent.

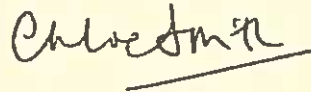
This Government has always believed that the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry led by Sir Anthony Hart was the most effective way of establishing the truth, and I can assure you the UK Government and agencies provided the fullest possible degree of co-operation to the Inquiry, which Sir Anthony acknowledges in his final report.

However, you will be aware that the report was commissioned by the First Minister and deputy First Minister, who announced the setting up of the HIAI on 31 May 2012. The First Minister and deputy First Minister are obliged to lay the report in the Assembly, but given the current political situation in Northern Ireland this is not likely to be possible before the Autumn.

Sir Anthony in his closing statement of 20th January quite clearly states that the report, its findings and recommendations are a matter for the new Executive and the Assembly, and urges them to give effect to the recommendations as a matter of priority.

I fully recognise the frustration felt by the victims and survivors at the lack of progress in taking forward Sir Anthony Hart's recommendations due to the suspension of the devolved administration. The Secretary of State continues to urge the parties to seek urgent resolution to restore the Executive so that a response can be provided to Sir Anthony's report at the earliest opportunity - including on his recommendations on redress and support for victims and survivors of child abuse.

Yours ever,



CHLOE SMITH MP

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND