

Public inquiry into historic child abuse

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 2020
Petitions Committee | 2020

Research Briefing:

Petition Number: P-05-954

Petition title: Petition for a public inquiry by the Welsh Government into the historic child abuse on Caldey Island

Text of petition: As a victim of child abuse by catholic priests and monks I wish to get the Welsh Government to hold a public inquiry into the historic child abuse on Caldey Island. Victims need the truth and answers as to why an ongoing investigation for 29 years has failed the victims. The inquiry will help to safeguard children in the future.

Background

In November 2017, [the Guardian newspaper](#) reported that six women had begun civil proceedings against the Cistercian order alleging that a monk, Father Thaddeus Kotik from the Abbey of Our Lady and St Samson on Caldey Island had sexually abused them during the 1970's and 1980's. The Guardian article stated that the children had reported the abuse to their parents and the Abbot had been informed. The women subsequently received compensation payments.

Following the Guardian report, [BBC Wales reported](#) that Dyfed Powys Police had confirmed that they had received reports of abuse, and while there had been investigations in 2014 and 2016 they could not prosecute as the monk had died in 1992. The [Minister and Clergy Sexual Abuse Survivors group](#) called for an independent investigation at the time, and [it was reported by the BBC](#), that the Children's Commissioner for Wales had said that there was not enough information available to launch an inquiry.

Purpose of a public inquiry

The Cabinet Office [Inquiries Guidance](#) states that an inquiry might be set up for one or more reasons. These include:

- To establish the cause of a major disaster, accident or other event involving significant damage or loss of life;

- To make recommendations as to how to learn lessons from such an event;
- To investigate serious allegations of general public concern which require thorough and impartial investigation and for which ordinary civil or criminal processes may not be adequate or appropriate.

Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) was established in 2014 following serious, high profile instances of non-recent child sexual abuse. The Inquiry has launched 15 investigations into a broad range of institutions identified on the basis of the [Panel's criteria for selection of investigations](#). These include separate inquiries into Religious Organisations and Settings; the Anglican Church; and the Roman Catholic Church.

In her letter to the Committee, Julie Morgan, Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services states that the Welsh Government has informed the Independent inquiry of the Caldey island events. IICSA has said this is a matter of interest to them.

The Truth Project

The [Truth Project](#) is part of IICSA. It aims to offer victims and survivors of child sexual abuse the chance to share their experiences and be heard with respect. Experiences can be shared in writing, over the phone or in person (although this is on hold in line with social distancing guidance).

The Truth Project support service does not provide therapy or make referrals to therapists or help with long term recovery. It can offer:

- emotional and practical support with sharing experiences, and help with any questions or concerns a victim or survivor has, and
- advice on other services that can give more support in the future.

Sharing your experience with the Truth Project is **not part of a legal process and the IICSA will not investigate an individual's case.**

National Assembly for Wales action

On [29 November 2017](#), Darren Millar AM asked the then Minister for Children and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies whether any consideration had been given to commissioning an independent inquiry into allegations of abuse on Caldey Island. In response, the Minister said that the Welsh Government advised anyone who suffered abuse to report allegations to the police, to contact local authorities' social services or the Truth Project. He also said that, at that time, Dyfed-Powys Police were engaged in ongoing investigations into the allegations, and that as such, it would not be appropriate to comment further. He also noted that the Children's Commissioner had written to Caldey Island abbey to seek assurances. He said

that it was ‘too early to call for an inquiry’ because of the detail that was still emerging and the live police investigation.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.