

# COMMISSIONER FOR SURVIVORS OF INSTITUTIONAL CHILDHOOD ABUSE

## ADVISORY PANEL

### Information Booklet

Promoting the interests of victims and survivors of historical institutional childhood abuse



## What is the Advisory Panel?

The purpose of the Advisory Panel is to “provide a forum for consultation and discussion” between the Commissioner and victims and survivors.

The work of the Advisory Panel will be informed by our consultation which focuses on services and supports to victims and survivors. The current consultation will provide key information on the core issues for victims and survivors, in relation to their engagement with services, which can include support from doctors, hospitals and other specialist services.

## Who can be a member of the Advisory Panel?

The Historical Institutional Abuse (NI) Act 2019 requires that all members of the Advisory Panel must be victims and survivors of historical institutional childhood abuse as defined in the legislation.

This means that members must have been subject to abuse as children (under 18 years) while in a residential institution in Northern between 1922 and 1995 (both inclusive). The residential institution must fall within the remit of the legislation which includes, for example, state, religious and charity run children’s homes, borstals and training schools.

Members are individuals with lived experience of historical institutional childhood abuse who are interested in quality of life issues impacting victims and survivors including the future of services.

Members will be appointed for up to a one-year period, with possible extension and will require a Basic Access NI check.

## How will I benefit from being a member of the Advisory Panel?

A full induction programme will be provided to the Advisory Panel. Members will be given the opportunity to:

- Draw on your lived experiences.
- Have a key role in engaging in consultation and discussion with the Commissioner, particularly in relation to the current and future service needs of victims and survivors.
- Draw upon personal experiences to contribute to positive change.
- Participate in discussions, consider the findings of wider engagement and consultation with victims and survivors, review documents and papers, support the development of approaches to providing advice to government and other agencies and identifying opportunities to influence positive change for victims and survivors.

## Are members of the Advisory Panel being paid?

The role of panel member is voluntary and is not a paid position, travel and expenses will be paid as per the NICS travel and subsistence policy.

## Will I be anonymous as a member of the Advisory Panel?

It will not be possible to be an anonymous member of the Advisory Panel as the Panel will meet together to engage directly on the work to be taken forward. It may also be necessary to publish names of those acting as members of the Panel.

This will also ensure that there is openness and transparency about membership of the Advisory Panel.

## When will the Advisory Panel meet?

The Panel will schedule quarterly meetings during the working day. Meetings will generally take place in Belfast. In addition, members may be asked to take part in other activities during the year. These may include meetings with politicians, public servants, academics and international experts. Occasional travel may be required.

## **Why is there an application and interview process and what will it be like?**

We know that the nature of Advisory Panel as a public-facing group, working in a complex and emotive subject area may not be suited to everyone. As such, we have developed an application process that invites you to reflect on your personal experiences and attributes to help you decide whether or not this is something that you would like to do. The selection process will have two stages the first being the submission of an Expression of Interest and the second stage an interview.

The first part of the process will involve making an Expression of Interest.

Then the interview process will give you an opportunity to share any thoughts or ask questions you may wish to address. It will also provide an opportunity for the Commissioner and other members of the Panel to have a conversation with you in an individual setting.

All prospective members will be required to take part in a selection process. We want this to be as straightforward and accessible as possible, while ensuring that you have sufficient time to reflect on the requirements of the role.

Recruitment to the Advisory Panel will be carried out through an open and transparent process and will adhere to Section 75 Equality Legislation.

## **Where will the interview be held?**

The interview will be held in Belfast.

## **Who will interview me?**

The Interview Panel will include the Commissioner and two independent members, one of whom will be from AAB People, an external recruitment company.

This will give you an opportunity to share any thoughts or ask questions you may wish to address and provide an opportunity for the Commissioner to have a conversation with you in an individual setting.

## **How will additional needs be supported?**

We welcome applications from all suitable persons.

We want this to be as straightforward and accessible as possible, while ensuring that you have sufficient time to reflect on the requirements of the role. Reasonable adjustments will be made to accommodate individuals participating at interview.

## **Can I be accompanied to interview?**

Unfortunately, carers will not be able to take part in the interview, however, AAB People will consider arrangements for carers to accompany those with specific needs.

## **I have more questions about the Advisory Panel, who can I contact?**

AAB People are supporting the Office of the Commissioner with the recruitment process and all queries about recruitment to the Advisory Panel should be directed to AAB People. Please contact Zara Mirza at [zara.mirza@aabpeople.com](mailto:zara.mirza@aabpeople.com) or on 028 9601 6146.

## **But I don't consider myself a victim...**

That's ok. We never ask anyone to wear 'labels' they are not comfortable with. We know that many of you will have a lot to offer through your lived experiences and we know how valuable your contribution to the Advisory Panel will be, particularly in relation to supporting the Office on looking at general and specialist services to victims and survivors.

The terms 'victim and survivor' are defined in law for anyone impacted by historical institutional childhood abuse.

Under the Historical Institutional Abuse (NI) Act 2019, a victim or survivor is a person who suffered abuse while a child and while resident in an institution at some time between 1922 and 1995 (both inclusive).

Thank you for your interest in applying to become a member of the Advisory Panel.