

Consultation Questionnaire

Q1 Comments

I agree fully with the proposed purpose of a National Confidential Forum (NCF). The Pilot Forum – or Time To Be Heard (TTBH) – demonstrated the value of such a forum for those whose experiences in residential child-care included incidents or circumstances that were abusive in one or more ways. Independent evaluation confirmed the findings of TTBH and that underscores my confidence in agreeing with the proposed purpose of the NCF.

Q2 Comments

It is important that the NCF operates independently from Government. That 'separateness' is necessary if those who come forward are to be confident that the NCF is focused on acknowledging their needs and not serving, essentially, the interests of Government and those who provided residential child-care.

Q3 Comments

I believe that the NCF should be a separate unit rather than integrated into another public body. Its distinctive identity will help to affirm that it is not subsidiary to or subject to the priorities of an over-arching public body.

Q4 Comments

I agree strongly with this. I note the Government's affirmation that its responsibility is to those who were placed in care under its authority; that principle, if applied universally and consistently, would require the inclusion of all adults who, as children, were placed in care by the State. In my view, the State has a duty to ensure that those who experienced abuse of any kind are acknowledged and supported, if that is their wish.

Q5 Comments

In Para 4.1.1 of my report on 'Time To Be Heard', I explain why I think a NCF should be open to all and not subject to a 'selection' process; my views on that have not changed.

I recommended in my report, subsequently, that those whose experiences were uniformly good should be asked, initially, to provide a written testimony. My intention was to allow accounts of good experiences to inform our understanding of residential child-care in the past - from a range of perspectives. Another reason was to allow more former residents to be included more quickly in the process. Such an approach would also cater for some former residents who may prefer to contribute in this way.

I saw written accounts as 'initial' in the sense that it is conceivable that the NCF members having read such accounts, might consider it desirable to invite the author of a written account to meet them, either to help inform their understanding of provision more fully or to clarify whether some of the experiences described were, in effect, inappropriate.

Q6 Comments

My comments in response to question 4 also apply here. In my view, those who were cared for as children in the types of institution listed in question 6 should be included - along with those who were boarded out.

Q7 Comments

Participants can benefit from information about:

- counselling and support services in their own area and at a regional and national level
- action they can take to locate their records and other information about their childhood including their families, their health and their education
- action they can take if they wish to pursue any form of restorative justice or other forms of redress

Q8 Comments

I think protection from legal action should be provided for the Head and other staff of the NCF. Their involvement in a process that is designed to be acknowledging and affirming to those who have experienced abuse as children in residential care settings, should not be constrained by or at risk from action, whatever its motives, that could damage the potential of the NCF to provide the intended outcomes for participants.

I also believe that participants in a NCF should be protected from legal action and for the same reasons as those who constitute the NCF.

Q9 Comments

Barriers will vary according to individual circumstances. In some cases, lower levels of literacy could impede some participants' access to information about and engagement with a NCF - or discourage some from coming forward. In other cases, disability and health matters could be inhibiting and so a NCF would need to ensure that its communication and accessibility policies and strategies are accommodating of and enabling to people with particular needs

Q10 Comments

I welcome warmly the progress towards the establishment of a NCF and I wish the ongoing process well. It remains a concern to me that the NCF is still not in place given the age and health-related needs of many survivors.

When the NCF is in place I believe strongly that priority should be given to meeting and hearing from older and ill survivors.