



**It's time to
be heard**



 INDEPENDENT INQUIRY
CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Contents

Introduction	3
Step 1 Find out if the Truth Project's right for you	6
Step 2 We'll get in touch	7
Step 3 Share your experience	8
Step 4 We take account of your experience	11
Available support	12
Privacy and involving the police	15
Frequently asked questions	16
Thank you	19

Introduction



“The Truth Project is a vital part of the Inquiry’s work. We want to hear from victims and survivors of child sexual abuse, understand your experiences and learn from you. This input will help us make meaningful recommendations to help prevent sexual abuse in the future. I would encourage you to contact the Truth Project and talk to us. We will listen to you and treat you with respect. What you tell us will help protect future generations.”

Drusilla Sharpling CBE
Inquiry Panel member

Thank you for your interest in the Truth Project

The Truth Project, part of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, is an opportunity for victims and survivors to come to a confidential session to describe their experiences and how institutions failed to protect them. You can also make suggestions to help prevent abuse in the future. We designed The Truth Project in discussion with victims and survivors and it is held in a supportive environment that puts your needs first. Anything said in a private session is free from judgement and questioning. We will use information from these sessions to shape our recommendations.

Getting in touch to take part in the Truth Project may be a big decision. For some people, sharing accounts of child sexual abuse can be difficult and distressing. You will be offered support before, during and after you share your experience with the Truth Project.

If you think you're ready to share with us, you can contact us in any way that suits you.

- Fill in our online form at **www.truthproject.org.uk**.
- Call us on **0800 917 1000**
(Lines are open between 8am–8pm Monday to Friday, and 10am–12pm on Saturdays.)
- Email **share@truthproject.org.uk**.
- Write to us at **Freepost IICSA, Independent Inquiry**

What's involved

Step 1

Find out if the Truth Project's right for you.

This doesn't commit you to anything – you can leave the process at any time.



Step 2

We'll get in touch and arrange your private session or help you to share your experience with us in writing at a time that suits you.



Step 3

Share your experience in writing or in a comfortable and confidential environment.

Share as much or as little as you like.



Step 4

If you agree, we turn the information you give us into a summary, but your personal details won't be published.

Step 1

Find out if the Truth Project's right for you



If you're ready to share your experience with the Truth Project, either in person, by phone or in writing, please contact us online or by phone, email or post.

This doesn't commit you to anything and you can leave the process at any time. The Truth Project website includes a 'Your Decision' section that can help you decide if you're ready.

If you use our online form or call us, we will ask you a few questions about your age at the time of the abuse and where it happened.

We'll then ask you to provide your preferred contact information, so we can get in touch to find out more about you and how you came to hear about the Truth Project.

Step 2

We'll get in touch

We'll contact you as soon as possible to arrange how and where you'd prefer to share your experience. We have a number of places across England and Wales for private sessions, and you can choose which one you'd like to visit. If you choose to share your experience by phone or in writing, we'll provide you with the information you need to enable you to do so.

You can change your mind

You're free to change your mind about taking part in the Truth Project, and you can leave the process at any time. If you've shared your experience but then decide you don't want us to use your information to support the Inquiry, just let us know.

"I would like to thank the panel for the professional, kind and understanding manner in which they dealt with my care."

Truth Project participant

Step 3

Share your experience

You can share your experience with us in a 60 to 90 minute private session or in writing.

Private session – in person or by phone

In person

If you would like to share your experience in person, we'll arrange the time and place with you and help with practical arrangements such as transport and hotel bookings. If you would like to bring a friend or relative with you, we can make arrangements for them too.

By phone

Private sessions can also take place by phone. Sharing your experience this way is similar to sharing in person, but you're in your own space. We can help you to think of an environment that is suitable for you, where you feel comfortable and can share without being disturbed.

Unless you've asked us not to, a support worker will contact you around four weeks before your private session to go through what the session will be like and answer any questions. They'll also ask how we can provide the best possible environment for you on the day, for example, if you have any particular needs. If you choose to have your session by phone, the support worker will help you think about what environment you would like to be in when you have your call, and whether you want someone with you or to be around afterwards. If you'd like more help and support in the run up to the session you can have several phone calls with your support worker, and they can attend the session with you if you want them to.

If you choose not to use our support service, you will still meet a support worker on the day who will be available to provide support as needed. If you are sharing by phone, the support worker will call you just before your session begins. They'll make sure you're comfortable and confirm you're the person we're expecting. If you give your support worker details

of any particular needs you have before your session, this will have been discussed with the facilitator, so you don't need to worry about the set up of your session.

You'll then be introduced to the facilitator and assistant facilitator. The room where your session takes place is private and arranged to encourage an informal, relaxed conversation. The private meeting rooms have been designed to look the same at every centre. If you are sharing by phone, the support worker will bring the facilitator and assistant facilitator into the call.

The facilitator will then ask you to talk about your experience. They might ask you some questions, or ask you to explain certain points to make sure they understand everything correctly. The conversation will be informal, at your pace, and not like an interview. You can discuss as much or as little as you like, and take a break or stop whenever you want to. If you agree, we'll digitally record your information so that we can produce a written summary.

Where the private session will take place

Your private session can take place at one of a number of locations across England and Wales and you can choose from any of the available locations. Once you get in touch, we will provide you with the options of where and when the session can be arranged. All the locations, which are not advertised publicly, are easily accessible by road and rail. We'll send you a map and a photo of your chosen location in plenty of time before your appointment with us. You'll also have a phone number to call if you have any difficulties on the day. If you prefer to have a private session by phone, we can help you think about a comfortable environment that is suitable for you, where you can share without being disturbed.

Sharing your experience in writing

If you choose to share your experience in writing and want more information on how to do this, you can contact us by phone, email or post. Our contact details are at the back of this booklet.



“This is a supportive, sensitive, well-thought-through experience. I was able to say in words what I have never been able to say in 45 years.”

Truth Project participant

Step 4

We take account of your experience

By taking part in the Truth Project, you will help us make recommendations to government and organisations on how to improve child protection in organisations and institutions across England and Wales. Unless you'd prefer us not to, we'll use the information from your experience to better understand child sexual abuse and help protect children in the future.

If you agree, we'd like to turn the information you give us into a summary. But don't worry, your personal details won't be published and we'll make sure nobody is able to work out who you are from the information we include. You can change your mind about how you'll allow us to use your information at any point until the report is published. Just let us know by phoning, emailing or writing to us using the contact information given at the start of this booklet.

How we will use your information for research

We'd like to use the experiences you've told us about so we can better understand child sexual abuse. Your information may be used for ongoing research and to support recommendations to help protect children in the future, but if you don't want us to use it in this way, we won't. The information that we collect is kept in a secure database; records do not include any identifiable information, like names or addresses; and it will be securely destroyed seven years after the research is published. No personal details are included in our reports, which are published online. The reports may include quotes from your experiences but no one will be able to identify you. You can change your mind about how we use your information at any time before the report is finalised.

If you don't want us to use your information, you can contact us by email, phone and post see details on page 19.

Available support

Support available before the session

A dedicated support worker will contact you for the first time four weeks before your session and offer emotional support throughout the process of sharing your experience.

Before the session, your support worker will talk to you about what to expect. They will answer any questions you may have and will be there to help you prepare. The support worker will also ask you some questions about your situation and your wellbeing and help create a support plan for the session and the days afterwards.

Support available on the day of the session

If you choose not to use our support services you will still be greeted by a support worker on the day of your session. If you are sharing by phone rather than in person, the support worker will call you just before your session is due to begin. The support worker's role is to help you think about your wellbeing and make sure you're comfortable and ready to share your experience. They will talk with you about anything that is helpful to share with the facilitator and assistant facilitator that will help them to be sensitive to what you need. You are welcome to bring your own support and they can be with you throughout the whole process – including in the session.

Follow-up support

Immediately after the session your support worker will check in with you about how you're feeling. They will be able to tell you about support services in your local area that may be helpful to you.

The support worker will then arrange a date and time to contact you, normally about two days after your session, to check how you are feeling and answer any questions you might have.

You will then be offered a support call two weeks later and at that point the support service comes to an end.

If you originally said no to support, you can change your mind at any point and we will make sure support is still available to you on the day and afterwards with the follow-up calls.

Support is also available if you choose to share your experience in writing. The support is still phone based and the purpose of the support service is:

- to emotionally support you through sharing your experience in writing.
- to be a point of contact for you if you have any questions.
- to be able to point you in the direction of local services that can provide further support with any needs you may have.

Support after whichever way you choose to share your experience is time-limited and focused and although we can help support you throughout your Truth Project experience, we are unable to make referrals, provide therapy or help with long term recovery. There are other organisations that may be able to help and we can signpost you to them. Visit **www.truthproject.org.uk/help-and-support** for links to helplines and other organisations that can help you find the support that's right for you.

“It is such a relief to go to sleep at night knowing that someone, somewhere is doing something to try to ensure a safer future for vulnerable children.”

Truth Project participant

Privacy and involving the police

We understand that you might be concerned about your privacy and what will happen to the information you give us. You don't have to give us any information that can identify you if you don't want to. All we need to know is what you would like us to call you and how we can contact you.

If you do choose to share personal information with us, we take your privacy very seriously. Our Terms of Reference say we must make sure that all personal and sensitive information is safely stored and is shared only with those who need to see it. We have secure systems in place to make sure this happens. We also have a legal ruling in force (called a Restriction Order), which prevents anyone from making public the identity of people who've shared their experience with us. When our inquiry is finished, all your information will be securely destroyed.

We must pass all allegations of child abuse to the police. This includes those that have been reported before or where the abusers are dead or convicted. We give the police a summary of the allegation of child abuse (what happened, where and when it happened, and who the alleged abusers were), but do not share other details of your experience.

We will only pass on your name and contact details if you want us to, unless we believe there is a child-protection concern or someone is at risk of serious harm. In that case we will pass your details to the police or another service if you have given them to us.

We might receive a request to reveal the information we hold if you are involved in criminal proceedings relating to what you share with us. For example, the prosecution or defence teams might ask for information if someone is being prosecuted for child sexual abuse. We will only pass this information on without your permission, if we are ordered by a court to do so.

Frequently asked questions

Can I change my mind if I previously said I don't need support?

Yes, a support worker will still be available on the day of the session if you need them. You're also free to change your mind about receiving follow-up phone calls from the support worker. Simply phone or email us to let us know.

Can I bring someone with me?

Yes, you can bring up to two people with you. They can either join the session or wait outside the room. You can discuss this with your support worker, and you can also change your mind on the day if you want.

“Best thing I have done. Gave me a voice and allowed me to tell about my experience in a safe, understanding environment.”

Truth Project participant

Will the Truth Project cost me anything?

The Truth Project is completely free. When you decide to get involved, you can choose between meeting in person, by phone or sharing your experience in writing. If you choose to meet in person we will cover travel, accommodation and reasonable out of pocket expenses. If you choose to share by phone, the phone call will be free.

Can I bring documents with me?

Yes. If you think any documents will help us to better understand your experience, please send photocopies beforehand so we can read them. We'd rather you didn't send originals, but if you have to, please send them by recorded delivery. You can post them to **Freepost IICSA Independent Inquiry**, or email them to us at **contact@iicsa.org.uk**.

Will the police contact me?

If you agree to us passing your contact details to the police, a local force may contact you to discuss the allegations of child abuse. We cannot guarantee which police force this may be. You can tell us how you would like the police to contact you and we will pass this on (for example, by an email, by phone, preferred days and times, and other preferences). As the inquiry is independent of the police, we cannot guarantee if, when or how the police may contact you.

Will sharing my experience lead to an investigation?

Sharing your experience at the Truth Project is not part of a legal process and does not involve an investigation of your case. If you agree to us passing your contact details to the police, this could result in further action or investigation by the police. We are independent and have no involvement in any action taken by the police.

How can I continue to get involved?

There are a number of ways outside of the Truth Project for you to work with us to help protect children from sexual abuse. We have a Victims and Survivors Forum where you can sign up to receive the latest updates and events. We also welcome your feedback to improve our website and campaign. Find out more about our Victims and Survivors Forum on our website at **www.iicsa.org.uk/victims-and-survivors/attend-forum**.

We hold and manage your information in line with data-protection laws. If you would like to know more, please visit our website, contact our Data Protection Officer at **dpo@iicsa.org.uk**, or phone **020 3789 2136**.

Thank you

We know it's not easy to share experiences of child sexual abuse. By sharing with us, you will greatly contribute to our work. It's very important for us to hear from you, so your support also helps us to make recommendations to protect children, improve laws, policies and practices, and respond to institutional failures.

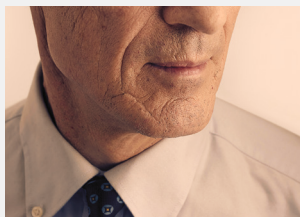
We hope we've covered all the important issues in this booklet, but if you would like more information, please call, email or write to us.

- Phone: **0800 917 1000**
(Lines are open between 8am–8pm Monday to Friday, and 10am–12pm on Saturdays.)
- Email: **share@truthproject.org.uk**
- Write to: **Freepost IICSA, Independent Inquiry**

Or, you can find out more at **www.truthproject.org.uk**.

“After 37 years of silence and self blame, I found the courage to tell. I commend the Truth Project to all victims as our opportunity to give our version of events through a process that is safe and dignified. Go for it!”

Truth Project participant



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For more information, please visit
www.truthproject.org.uk.