

Guide for written submissions

If you wish to express your views on the Inquiry in writing, through a written submission, please use the following questions as a guide.

What is a Public Inquiry?

A Public Inquiry is a way for Government to openly and transparently investigate a matter of public concern. The Minister of Health, Robin Swann, MLA intends to establish a Public Inquiry, in line with the legislation set out in the Inquiries Act 2005 to investigate allegations of abuse of patients at Muckamore Abbey Hospital (MAH). A Public Inquiry can only be set up under the Inquiries Act 2005 by a Government Minister; however, once established, it is independent of the Government.

Public Inquiries examine issues of serious public concern. The Inquiry Chair will look at decisions and events that led or contributed to the issues being investigated. A Public Inquiry typically answers at least the following questions:

- What happened?
- Who is responsible?
- What can we learn from this?

The criminal investigation led by the PSNI into the allegations of abuse of patients will continue and be unaffected by the Public Inquiry. The Public Inquiry cannot make any findings of guilt; its role is to provide facts and recommendations to Government and other authorities, if appropriate.

Question 1:

Time frame of the Inquiry (what period in time should the Inquiry cover?)

The Inquiries Act 2005 specifies that in Northern Ireland, Public Inquiries can only cover periods in which the Northern Ireland Assembly was in session unless the Minister seeks the Secretary of State's consent to extend the period outside these timeframes. This means that events prior to 2 December 1999 cannot be examined and also the periods 11 February 2000 to 30 May 2000 and 14 October 2002 to 8 May 2007 without the permission of the Secretary of State.

In your response you might want to consider:

- ***What period of time do you think the Inquiry should focus on?***

Question 3:

Evidence (what should the Inquiry look at?)

Think about the reports, documents and communication that your family had with Muckamore Abbey Hospital.

In your response you might want to consider:

- ***Is there any type of evidence, such as documents, communications, or reports that you think it is essential for the Inquiry to obtain?***

Examples of evidence could include documents, communications, video footage, recordings or reports

Question 4:

Power of Inquiry to make recommendations (what should the Inquiry do?)

A Public Inquiry typically answers at least the following questions, What happened?, Who is responsible?, What can we learn from this? The Inquiry will seek to establish responsibility for the abuse at Muckamore Abbey Hospital. It should also make recommendations to prevent future occurrences.

In your response you might want to consider:

- ***Do you agree that this is what the Inquiry should do?***

- ***Are there any other functions you think the Inquiry should have?***

Question 5:

The Inquiry Chair (what sort of background should the person who is running the Inquiry have?)

Public Inquiry chairs may have a strong legal background, and can be former judges. This ensures that they are able to manage the legal complexities associated with running a Public Inquiry. When chairs are from a non-legal background, they tend to be drawn from professions that the public trust, such as social workers, nurses and doctors. Chairs that are from a non-legal, relevant professional expert backgrounds may have a higher level of expertise in the subject areas related to the Inquiry.

In your response you might want to consider:

Do you think the Chair of the Inquiry should have a legal or a professional expert background?

Question 6:

Additional views (do you have anything else to add?)

In your response you might want to consider:

- **Do you have any other views or information that you would like the Inquiry to consider?**

Thank you for taking the time to complete this written submission. Please return this form in the stamped addressed envelope provided to:

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