Inquiry Team

Chairman of the Inquiry

Sir Patrick Coghlin

The Rt Hon Sir Patrick Coghlin is a retired member of the Court of Appeal of Northern Ireland. Sir Patrick was educated at Queen’s University, Belfast and Christ’s College, Cambridge. Sir Patrick was called to the Bar in Northern Ireland in 1970; England and Wales (Gray’s Inn) in 1975; and Ireland and New South Wales, Australia in 1993.

While at the Bar he served as Junior Crown Counsel for Northern Ireland between 1983 and 1985, when he was appointed a QC. He served as Chairman of his professional body, the Bar Council, between 1991 and 1993. Between 1993 and 1997 he served as Senior Crown Counsel for Northern Ireland before his appointment, in 1997, as a judge of the High Court of Justice in Northern Ireland. He was promoted to the Court of Appeal as Lord Justice of Appeal in Northern Ireland in 2008 and was appointed to the Privy Council in 2009. He retired in 2015.

Inquiry Panel Member

Dame Una O’Brien

Dame Una O’Brien was Permanent Secretary at the Department of Health in London from 2010 to 2016.

Earlier in her career, Una’s roles included time working in the Prime Minister’s Efficiency Unit within the Cabinet Office and an assignment as Principal Private Secretary to the Secretary of State for Transport. Una has also spent time running a major public inquiry and worked for two MPs in the House of Commons as a researcher on Northern Ireland.

Una grew up in Birmingham and she currently serves on the Council of the University of Birmingham. She has degrees in History and International Relations from Oxford University and the London School of Economics and she was a Kennedy Scholar studying government at Harvard.

Technical Assessor to the Inquiry

Dr Keith MacLean OBE

After more than 20 years in the energy industry, Keith left his role as Policy and Research Director at SSE in 2014. He has acted as an adviser to the Scottish and UK Governments and, as chair of the main industry working groups used for consultation by government, has detailed knowledge of the processes involved in the development and implementation of major policy initiatives like Electricity Market Reform, renewable energy and energy efficiency.

He now works as an independent adviser and has continued his involvement in the sector as Industry Co-chair of the Energy Research Partnership as well as Chair of the UK Energy Research Centre and the Scientific Advisory Committee for the Research Councils’ Energy Programme.
Secretary to the Inquiry

Andrew Browne OBE

Andrew Browne has been a member of the Northern Ireland Civil Service since 1980 and has served in a wide range of posts across four departments. He was Secretary to the Human Organs Inquiry and assisted in setting up a number of public inquiries established by DHSSPS. Between 2012 and 2017 Andrew served as Secretary to the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry.

Paula Dawson MBE

Paula Dawson has been a civil servant for 29 years and began her career working for the Lord Chancellor’s Department in London. She joined the Northern Ireland Court Service in 1995 where she served in a number of posts until moving to work in the Lord Chief Justice’s Office in 2004. Paula was the Finance and Governance Manager for the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry from 2013 to 2017 and fulfilled the same role for the RHI Inquiry from February 2017. She has served as Inquiry Secretary since Andrew Browne’s retirement.

Solicitor to the Inquiry

Patrick Butler

Patrick Butler was called to the Bar of Northern Ireland in 1998. He has previously worked for the Equality Commission and for the Departmental Solicitor’s Office. Patrick has extensive experience of a number of legal areas including employment law, company law, judicial review and Parole Commissioners’ work. Patrick was the Inquiry Solicitor to the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry which published its report on 20 January 2017.

Counsel to the Inquiry

David Scoffield QC - Senior Counsel

David Scoffield was called to the Bar of Northern Ireland in 1999. He quickly established a successful practice, primarily in the field of public and administrative law, with a particular interest in constitutional law and human rights.

In 2011 David was appointed a Queen’s Counsel and called to the Inner Bar of Northern Ireland. He regularly acts both for and against Government departments and other public bodies in the superior courts of Northern Ireland and the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom.

Donal Lunny – Junior Counsel

Donal Lunny was called to the Bar of Northern Ireland in 1998. He specialises in civil, chancery, and commercial litigation and also undertakes public law cases. His practice has involved acting both for and against Government departments. Since 2004 he has been a member of the Government Civil Panel of junior counsel.

Joseph Aiken - Junior Counsel

Joseph Aiken was called to the Bar of Northern Ireland in 1999. Prior to taking up his role as Junior Counsel to the Inquiry he specialised in civil and commercial litigation, acting both for and against the Government. He has a particular interest in public inquiries, and has contributed to the leading textbook in the area, “Beer on Public Inquiries” published by Oxford University Press in 2011. Between 2013 and 2017 Joseph acted as Junior Counsel to the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry in Northern Ireland.
The Staff Team

From its establishment in February 2017 to the publication of the Report in March 2020 over 50 people have worked in the Inquiry. The Inquiry comprised the chairman, panel member, assessor and counsel as well as a team of lawyers and the secretariat which was responsible for all administrative matters.