



Date: 19<sup>th</sup> January 2012

Anne Peat  
Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee  
Room T3.40  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

Dear Ms Peat:

## Consideration of Petition PE 1351

Thank you for your letter of 19 December 2011.

I welcome the commitment given by the Scottish Government to advancing the recommendations arising from my report on 'Time To Be Heard' and in particular the establishment of a National Confidential Forum. I also welcome the evidence given by Ministers to the Public Petitions Committee on the extent to which the Government is engaging in consultation about the way forward in relation to the proposed National Confidential Forum. The Government's liaison with the Scottish Human Rights Commission, in my view, is very important for survivors and other stakeholders in developing an appropriate national framework of ways and means of responding to the needs and rights of survivors.

I believe firmly that to find the most appropriate way forward necessitates effective consultation, in particular with survivors, in order to ensure confidence in and ownership of the decisions taken and the provisions made - and I recognise that that takes time. That said, I note with interest the concern expressed by members of the Committee that conclusions be reached and provisions made as soon as possible. I share that concern; for older and ill survivors time is not in abundance, they need to be heard as soon as possible. It is important that they be kept informed of the process underway and of the progress being made. I wonder what could be done as an interim measure - and without prejudice to what is eventually established by Parliament - to allow those older and ill survivors who want to be



heard to have that opportunity. A confidential forum such as 'Time To Be Heard', offers more than satisfaction to those who take part; as the pilot demonstrated, it offers a therapeutic experience from which participants, not least those who are older or ill, could benefit and, for some, that is the most important outcome.

I wish the Government and all those engaged in consultations about the proposed National Confidential Forum every success in determining the way forward.

Yours Sincerely,

Tom Shaw CBE  
(Formerly Chair of 'Time To be Heard')