

"Altman steps into abuse inquiry counsel gap

One of the country's most experienced criminal barristers has been appointed to the £100 million Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse.

Brian Altman, QC, who as senior treasury counsel has led some of the biggest prosecutions at the Old Bailey – ranging from murders to complex terrorist cases – will take over as lead counsel after the sudden resignation last year of Ben Emmerson, QC.

Alexis Jay, who chairs the inquiry, described Altman as "hugely experienced, having spent 16 years as treasury counsel, the last two and a half years of which were as first senior treasury counsel".

After his appointment was confirmed, Altman said he looked forward to taking up his post. His salary was not disclosed but Emmerson earned more than £400,000 from his work at the inquiry in 2015. Altman said: "The government and the public have set the inquiry a huge challenge to investigate institutional responses to child sexual abuse in the past, and to report and make recommendations in order to prevent such abuse happening in the future."

Observers view Altman – who is a tenant at [2 Bedford Row](#) chambers in London and took silk in 2008 – as being a member of the top coterie of crime barristers at the English Bar. He prosecuted Levi Bellfield in 2011 for the abduction and murder of the schoolgirl Milly Dowler, and those accused of the Birmingham suicide bomb plot in 2012 and the 1982 Hyde Park bombing.

The inquiry has been plagued by controversy since it was originally launched by Theresa May in 2014 when she was home secretary. Last month it emerged that all the investigative strands will be retained after an internal review concluded that it should not be scaled back.

Emmerson resigned shortly after being suspended amid concerns about his leadership. His deputy on the legal team had resigned days earlier."

'The Brief' (a Times daily legal bulletin)