

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

PO Box 24085; Edinburgh EH7 9EA

e-mail: talktous@childabuseinquiry.scot

Factsheet – for witnesses

If you want to tell us you were abused there is a different [factsheet](#) for you. Please refer to that factsheet for information.

This factsheet is for *other* witnesses to this Inquiry. This covers a wide range of people including staff members of care providers, managers of care providers, policy officials, social workers, police, doctors, inspectors, academics, and counsellors.

What's a public inquiry?

A government minister can establish a public inquiry to investigate and report on a matter of public concern.

A public inquiry is impartial and completely independent of government. Its conduct and procedures are determined by the Chair but they usually include recovering relevant documentary and other evidence, taking statements, holding public hearings where oral evidence is given, analysing the outcome of their investigations and evidence gathering, and making recommendations in its report(s).

What's this Inquiry about?

SCAI's tasks are determined by a government minister and are set out in its wide Terms of Reference ("ToR").

SCAI's ToR direct it to investigate the abuse of children in care in Scotland. That includes identifying the nature and extent of that abuse, its impact on children and their families, whether those responsible for the provision of care failed in their duties, whether any failures have been rectified and whether changes to the law, policies or procedures are required.

In the course of its work, SCAI's procedures include case studies in the course of which the provision of care by a particular organisation or of a particular type are investigated and examined. They are usually presented at public hearings. Case study findings are usually published following the close of a case study.

When SCAI has completed its work, it will present a final report to the Scottish Parliament.

What powers does SCAI have?

The Chair of SCAI has various powers. They include the power to require individuals and organisations to provide relevant documentary and oral evidence.

Whilst the Chair of SCAI is a senior Scottish judge, SCAI is not a court. SCAI's purposes do not include determining whether any person or organisation is liable to pay compensation or whether any crimes have been committed. The Chair does not have power to award compensation nor does she have the power find anyone guilty of having committed an offence.

What does the Inquiry do?

We collect evidence and information about abuse of children in care. We do this, among other ways, by speaking to witnesses at interviews.

Interviews can cover a wide range of topics, depending on the type of evidence being offered by the witness. Examples of topics are:

- allegations of abuse
- the general treatment of children in care
- the recruitment of staff and foster carers
- relevant national and local government policies about children in care
- inspection of care providers
- systems for reporting of abuse
- reports of particular abuse and actions taken
- the long term effect of abuse on those who have been abused
- changes in the law in the past, and in the future

What the Inquiry asks you about may depend on what type of evidence you have to offer and/or what role you had or have.

The Inquiry also collects documents from people and organisations. The documents include records about the care of children and reports of abuse, and documents about procedures, policies, the law and other investigations.

The Inquiry holds public hearings where evidence is heard.

The Inquiry publishes all its witness statements. For more information on when identities are kept confidential see our [protocol on restriction orders](#). You may, for example, be a “whistle-blower” – someone who wants to reveal the internal operations or secrets of an organisation. We understand that, in such circumstances,

you may wish to apply for anonymity in relation to any involvement you have with the Inquiry.

How will you know we want your evidence?

We may come across your name in the course of our investigations. For example, it may have been given to us by a person who alleges you abused them when they were in care as a child or it may have been given to us by an organisation that provided residential care for children.

If we need your evidence, we will contact you. Whilst the Chair has the power to compel you to give evidence in writing or orally or both, we hope you will agree to provide it voluntarily.

If we need your evidence, the Chair is likely to issue a formal notice requiring you to provide evidence if you do not agree to do so voluntarily. The notice would be issued under **section 21 of the Inquiries Act 2005**. Failure to comply with such a notice may be a criminal offence.

You may want to offer to give evidence to us. If you do, please contact the Inquiry's witness support team to let us know you would like to talk to us.

You can contact our witness support team by:

- phone: on 0800 0929 300
- email at: talktous@childabuseinquiry.scot
- write to: SCAI, PO Box 24085, Edinburgh, EH7 9EA

Make sure you let us know if:

- you have any questions about the process of giving evidence
- you have a disability that may affect the way you can provide us with your evidence
- English is not your first language
- you need special arrangements because you are in a hospital, hospice, prison or something similar

Interviews and section 21 notices

If we need your evidence, we will either arrange for you to be interviewed or we may serve a section 21 notice for you to respond to in writing.

Interviews

Interviews are conducted by members of the Inquiry team. You will meet two statement takers from the Inquiry team at the interview. They will ask you questions

and your answers will be recorded. A written statement will be drafted for you to review after the interview.

A member of SCAI's witness support team will normally also be present at the interview. You can bring someone to support you in a personal capacity if you feel that would help. It's important that you feel able to speak freely to us during the interview.

An interview usually takes a few hours.

We will give you notice in advance of the general topics we will ask you about, so that you have time to think about them before attending the interview.

At the interview, you will be reminded of SCAI's obligation to pass information to the police to allow them to carry out risk assessments.

We may want to discuss particular documents with you. Where possible, we will ensure you receive copies of these documents before the interview.

Attendance at such an interview would be on a voluntary basis; we would like anyone who can help us to cooperate with our work. Please be aware, however, that the Chair has the power to order someone to give us a written statement. Failure to comply with such an order may be a criminal offence.

Section 21 notices

A section 21 notice is a formal notice. As it is a statutory notice, it is in formal legal terms.

The notice will contain a list of general questions, which tend to be the same questions asked of all witnesses involved with the same case study.

It is important that you respond to all the questions, even if that means telling us that you can't answer or that a particular question is not applicable in your circumstances.

Where you have provided a written response, members of the Inquiry team will produce a draft witness statement based on your response to the section 21 notice. We may also ask you follow up questions if there is anything in your response that we need to explore further.

The notice will contain a deadline by which you must respond in writing. If you don't think you will be able to respond on time, you can apply for the notice to be 'varied' by having the deadline extended. These applications are considered by the Chair, and it is helpful to her to have as much information as possible about why more time is required (including, where you have been asked to respond in writing, information about how much progress you have been able to make so far).

Witness statements

We will ask you to review your draft witness statement, and to sign it once you are content with its terms.

The witness statement will be evidence before the Inquiry. It will be a formal, permanent record of what you have told us in your written response or what you told us at interview. Your statement will be published by the Inquiry.

It is not possible to withdraw or amend your statement once you have signed it. But you can make a further statement if you want to say something more or different.

All statements are evidence and the Inquiry may have to use an unsigned statement if, for some reason, you are not able to sign it.

Public hearings

Some witnesses will be asked to give evidence at a public hearing. Not everyone who has given a witness statement to the Inquiry will be asked to do so. The statements of some witnesses who do not give oral evidence may be read aloud by counsel to the Inquiry at public hearings.

Whilst many witnesses agree to give oral evidence voluntarily, the Chair can order a witness to give evidence at a public hearing. This would be done by issuing a different type of section 21 notice. Failure to comply with such an order may be a criminal offence.

A section 21 notice of this sort will probably cover several dates, but will make clear what the likely date of your attendance is. However, you must make yourself available on all the dates mentioned in the notice. If cannot attend on the dates mentioned, you can apply for the notice to be 'varied' by having the dates changed and the Chair will decide whether it is reasonable to permit you to attend on a different date. You can also apply for the notice to be 'revoked' if you cannot attend at all. In either event, when applying to change the date or for revocation of the order, you will need to explain the reasons why you are asking the Chair to do so.

You should note that the Chair does have the power to compel witnesses to attend even if they feel they should not have to do so, or would prefer alternative dates.

Public hearings are more formal than interviews. They are not, however, as formal as court proceedings. Counsel to the Inquiry, core participants and/or their lawyers, and any others who have leave to appear and/or their lawyers may be in the room. Members of the public and the media may also be present. Normally, all the questions are asked by counsel to the Inquiry.

Witnesses who feel they need special measures to be taken in order to support them giving evidence, such as giving evidence from behind a screen or in private (with only key people in the hearings room), should raise their concerns with their witness support officer. The Chair will then decide whether it would be appropriate to make arrangements to accommodate their concerns. She may require further information before making a decision.

Every witness, when giving evidence, must promise to tell the truth. To do that the Chair will put each witness on oath or will ask them to affirm.

The Chair will not allow any witnesses to be questioned aggressively. What you say may, however, be tested in questioning, as a matter of fairness to others. For example, you may be asked what you have to say about evidence given by other witnesses, or about what appears in records.

You may be able to claim expenses, including travel expenses, for giving evidence at a public hearing.

Will my identity be made public?

The Chair of the Inquiry has made a decision known as a general restriction order. The effect of this order is that the identity of any applicant or anyone named as an abuser will not generally be revealed by the Inquiry before we publish any findings or reports. **This order does not protect your identity.**

You can ask the Inquiry to keep your identity private. You can do this by applying to the Chair for a restriction order. You can find out how to do this in our [protocol on restriction orders](#). You need to explain why it is important to keep your identity private.

Do I need a lawyer?

You don't need a lawyer to make contact with the Inquiry.

You need to be aware of your rights – including the right against self-incrimination – when you speak to us. Our lawyers can't give you advice, but you can get advice from your own lawyer before you come to an interview, sign your statement or give evidence at a public hearing.

If you decide you need a lawyer you can arrange this at any stage. The Inquiry may be able to help you pay for a lawyer if you can't afford one yourself. If you want your lawyer to come to your interview please discuss this with our witness support team.

For more information you can contact our witness support team:

- by phone on: 0800 0929 300
- write to: SCAI, PO Box 24085, Edinburgh, EH7 9EA
- email at: talktous@childabuseinquiry.scot
- look at our website at: www.childabuseinquiry.scot
- follow us on Twitter: @ScottishCAI

For general enquiries:

- email at: information@childabuseinquiry.scot

PRIVACY NOTICE

This notice explains how we collect and handle your personal data.

We are an independent public inquiry and we exercise statutory functions under the Inquiries Act 2005, in the public interest. We investigate the abuse of children in residential and foster care and we will publish a report or reports. We need to process personal data to enable us to carry out our work.

We explain in this notice in general terms how we collect and handle personal data.

Why we process your personal data

We process (or use) your personal data for a number of reasons, but all of those reasons help us to fulfil our Terms of Reference, which we are legally required to do.

How we collect personal data

When someone visits our website we collect information to measure the use of the website. We do not collect information that identifies anyone but we do track how many individuals have viewed different pages, so that we know what information is of most interest to the general public. Further information is provided on our website:

<https://www.childabuseinquiry.scot/terms-and-conditions/>

If you contact us by telephone, email or letter, or if you use the contact form on our website, we will retain the personal data which you provide to us, and we may use it to contact you about the work of the inquiry. We may also use it to help us with our investigations including our timetable and to help us decide which institutions may need the closest investigation.

We also recover records from a range of sources, including providers of care, local authorities, the police and the Scottish Government.

What sort of data we collect

We collect data about children in care, data about the commission of acts or omissions that constitute abuse and data about the impact of abuse. We collect and retain contact details, and data known as special category data and information about criminal convictions.

The records that we recover might include personal data including sensitive personal data, relating to criminal convictions, offences, or a person's sex life or sexual orientation.

How personal data is held

We keep your personal data secure and only share it with those who need to see it.

Personal data is held in secure encrypted electronic storage systems that are only accessible by members of the Inquiry team. Any hard copy information is held in secure conditions within premises to which members of the public do not have access.

All personal data we receive is handled fairly and lawfully in line with data protection legislation.

Who will personal data be shared with

We may have to disclose personal data, on a confidential basis, to organisations which provided residential care or people named as abusers, to organisations which hold records which could assist the Inquiry with its investigations, to experts or to the police.

In some cases your data may be made public, to allow us to fulfil our terms of reference. The Inquiry is extremely careful about what data is made public and we follow a very clear set of rules to make sure that this is done correctly.

Some people are entitled to remain anonymous (i.e. their identity is kept private), and any published information will hide any details that might lead to you being identified if you are entitled to anonymity. Who we consider is entitled to anonymity is set out in the Chair's General Restriction Order, which you can see here: <https://www.childabuseinquiry.scot/procedures/general-restriction-order/>

If you are concerned or unsure about whether your personal information may be made public, for example via our website or in a final report, you can ask our witness support team about whether you are entitled to anonymity.

Data controller

The Chief Executive to the inquiry is our "data controller". This means that she is responsible in law for all our information - how it is held and how it is used or destroyed.

Each year the Inquiry registers with the Information Commissioner – who supervises the Data Protection Act in the UK. A copy of our current registration certificate is available here: <https://www.childabuseinquiry.scot/key-documents/ico-registration/>.

Data retention

If you contact us by telephone, email or letter during the Inquiry, we will retain the personal data which you provide to us. We will do so solely to enable us to carry out our work. We will generally retain information for the duration of the Inquiry.

We are required to transmit certain records, including personal and sensitive personal data, to the Keeper of the Records of Scotland at the end of the Inquiry.

The legal basis for processing personal data

We process personal data lawfully in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation ('GDPR') and all other UK data protection legislation.

Our 'Lawful Basis' as defined by the GDPR is usually compliance with our legal obligation; sometimes it will be that we are carrying out a public task or pursuing our legitimate interest in fulfilling our Terms of Reference.

Complying with our legal obligation means: we process your personal data because it is necessary for us to comply with a law. In our case that law is set down in the Inquiries Act 2005. It is this Act that allows a minister to set up an inquiry and it tells us what we must do and how we must do it.

Carrying out a public task means that the processing we carry out is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in us. In our case, the entire purpose of this Inquiry is to benefit the public, by understanding what has happened in the past and to recommend improvements for the future.

Using the personal data in pursuit of our legitimate interest means that we are carrying out necessary processing for the purpose of our interest in fully carrying out our investigations, and creating a clear public record of the events, findings and recommendations. We can rely upon this lawful basis only when we believe our interest is not overridden by your fundamental rights and freedoms.

Your rights in respect of your personal data

Sometimes the processing we carry out allows us to rely on one or more of the exemptions set down in the Data Protection Act 2018. If it does we then have to decide whether or not it remains appropriate to comply with your request to assert your rights under the GDPR. Sometimes it will be correct to comply even if there is an exemption that we can rely upon. Sometimes it will not be correct for us to comply - this will be especially the case if complying with your request would make it more difficult for us to fulfil our Terms of Reference or puts another person's personal data at risk of being revealed.

You have the right to request:

- access to the personal data we hold about you
- that incorrect information we hold about you, be corrected
- that we stop or limit the processing of data we hold about you
- that we erase the information we hold about you

In all cases we will consider your request very carefully. In some cases we might decline your request, if we believe that your information falls within one of the exemptions set down in the Data Protection Act 2018 and that compliance with your request may hinder our ability to fulfil our terms of reference.

COVID- 19: Return to Hearings

This privacy statement has been updated in response to COVID-19 and is intended to provide information about changes in practice implemented for those visiting the Inquiry venue, and to reassure you that any information gathered in relation to the Test and Protect scheme is being shared appropriately by the Inquiry with NHS Scotland and all relevant public health bodies.

As part of NHS Scotland's Test and Protect Service, organisations have been requested to implement the voluntary process of gathering minimal contact details from customers or visitors when on their premises. This measure came into effect on 15 July 2020 and is part of the national effort to suppress the spreading of COVID-19.

As a result, visitors to the Hearings will be asked provide their name and telephone number. This information provided will be collected and held solely for the purpose of sharing with the NHS Test and Protect if requested and retained for no longer than 21 days. All contact information from visitors, collected by the Inquiry, will be processed in a secure and safe manner and in addition this will assist the NHS Scotland's Test and Protect service to identify and contact individuals who may have been exposed to the virus.

Where members of the public are attending hearings as a small household group, the contact details for one member – a 'lead member' – will be sufficient and the size of the group will be noted.

Our 'Lawful Basis' for processing this information (as defined by the GDPR) qualifies under the lawful basis of 'Legitimate Interest'. As providing this information is voluntary, you have the right to object and/or request for your data to be erased. The Inquiry will respect your choice to refuse to comply with this process. However, please be aware that the Inquiry also has the right to refuse entry to the Hearings.

Although collecting contact details for Track and Protect is voluntary, it is critical to national efforts to suppress the virus.

Contact and complaints

If you wish to contact us about the terms of this privacy notice, please write to kathleen.wilson@childabuseinquiry.scot

If you wish to make a complaint about how the Inquiry has handled your personal data, in the first instance please contact kathleen.wilson@childabuseinquiry.scot

If you are unhappy with the outcome of discussions with us you are entitled to contact the Information Commissioner's Office online at: <https://ico.org.uk/concerns/getting/>, by calling their helpline on 0303 123 1113 or by writing to them:

UK Information Commissioner's Office

Wycliffe House

Water Lane

Wilmslow

Cheshire

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