

# Newsletter

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry



## Foreword

by Lady Smith

2021 has not been without its challenges as we have navigated the ongoing pandemic and continued to progress our vitally important work. Despite periods of lockdown and ongoing restrictions, we have continued with the taking of statements either via WebEx or (since the middle of May) through face to face meetings, ongoing investigative work, preparation for announced case studies, preparing case study findings for publication, analysis of evidence and forward planning.

Over the coming months, we hope to continue with face to face meetings where applicants and witnesses would like to meet with members of the Inquiry team and where it is safe to do so. In keeping with our trauma informed approach, our Witness Support Team discuss options with individuals. Our aim is to offer a range of choices, and insofar as possible, to let applicants and witnesses decide how they would like to give their statement to the Inquiry. The feedback has been very encouraging.

The journey from our previous premises at Rosebery House to establishing ourselves in our new premises at Mint House was far from straightforward; to say that the move involved a phenomenal amount of hard work is an understatement. It simply would not have happened without the consistent, determined and willing

efforts of so many members of the Inquiry team whose contributions went far above and beyond the call of duty. For those of you who have not managed to visit our new hearings suite, further information is included in this newsletter along with a link to our familiarisation video which I hope that you find helpful.

On 8 October 2021, we resumed our boarding school case study in our new premises and have since heard evidence in relation to Gordonstoun School, Elgin; Queen Victoria School, Dunblane; Keil School, Dumbarton; and Fettes College, Edinburgh. Those hearings finished on 17th December 2021.

My findings in relation to the Scottish Government's response between August 2002 and December 2014 to Petition PE535, and other key issues raised by adult survivors of childhood abuse experienced in care in Scotland were published on 29 September 2021 and you can read more about these below.

On 9 November, I also published my findings in relation to the provision of residential care by the Marist Brothers at St Columba's College, Largs, and St Joseph's College, Dumfries between 1950 and 1981, further details of which are available in this newsletter. Work is also at an advanced stage on my findings in relation to the child migration case study and further updates will be provided early next year.

Turning to 2022, we hope to move on to hearings in relation to Merchiston Castle School, starting on 11 January and thereafter to closing submissions in relation to the entire boarding schools case study, all with a view to finishing the hearings by, I hope, late February.

Following the close of the boarding schools case study, as part of our work relating to the prevention of

the abuse of children in care, evidence in which the psychology of those who commit such abuse will be explored with expert witnesses. They will give their evidence together in a group, probably over two days.

In May 2022 we will begin hearing evidence relating to our investigations into the abuse of children in foster care. This evidence will include children who were boarded out, as well as children who were placed in foster care by a Scottish local authority. Foster care is a substantial case study and it is expected the case study will run for several months.

I am enormously grateful to counsel and to our dedicated staff for their resilience and flexibility in responding to all the challenges of the past year and for ensuring that we remain focused on our task. As we look to the year ahead, I am confident that we are in a strong position to progress the next phase of our work. However, mindful of the fact that the pandemic remains with us, the Inquiry remains ready to adapt and respond to any other measures that emerge in 2022 and we are glad to have the invaluable guidance of our expert trauma psychologist to assist us with that.

## HEARING UPDATES

### Boarding School case study

On 6 October, public hearings examining the abuse of children in Boarding Schools recommenced in the Inquiry's new premises, with evidence relating to Gordonstoun School in Elgin.

Over the last three months, the Inquiry has also heard evidence relating to Queen Victoria School in Dunblane, Keil School in Dumbarton and Fettes College in Edinburgh; both from witnesses in person, as well as remotely via video link.

This follows evidence earlier this year relating to Loretto School in Musselburgh and Morrison's Academy in Crieff (during the time it was a boarding school).

Hearings, as part of the Boarding Schools case study, will continue in the new year, with evidence relating to Merchiston Castle School in Edinburgh.

## Christmas opening hours update

Please note, during the festive period, the Talk to Us phone lines will be closed from **12pm on 24 December 2021** and will re-open at **10am on Wednesday 5 January 2022**.

The phone lines will be open as normal, **10.00am – 4.00pm** Monday to Friday, from **Monday 10 January 2022**.



## Scottish Government Findings

On 29 September, Lady Smith published her findings into the Scottish Government's response (between August 2002 and December 2014) to Petition PE535, and other key issues raised by adult survivors of childhood abuse experienced in care in Scotland.

She concluded that the delay of more than 13 years in setting up a public inquiry was woeful and wholly avoidable.

Public hearings took place between 17 November 2020 and 4 December 2020, during which time the Inquiry heard evidence from 12 witnesses including former and current Ministers as well as Scottish Government officials both remotely and in person. The written statements of four witnesses were also read in.

Lady Smith will take these findings into account when she analyses all the evidence gathered by the Inquiry and decides what recommendations to make in her final report.

The findings from the Scottish Government case study can be read in full on the Inquiry website: [www.childabuseinquiry.scot](http://www.childabuseinquiry.scot)

## Foster Care case study

Hearings in relation to the abuse of children in foster care are expected to commence in spring 2022. The foster care case study includes children who were boarded out, as well as children who were placed in foster care by a Scottish local authority.

Part one of the case study will feature evidence from relevant experts, foster care providers and regulatory bodies to provide context and scene setting. The Inquiry will then hear evidence from applicants, followed by a range of other witnesses.


It is expected the case study will last for several months.

The Inquiry would encourage anyone with relevant information to get in touch.




### Contact

Individuals can contact the Inquiry's Witness Support Team

 **by phone** on **0800 0929 300**

 **by post** at **PO Box 24202, Edinburgh EH3 1JN**

 **by email** at **talktous@childabuseinquiry.scot**

 **British Sign Language (BSL)** users can contact us direct through online sign language interpreter at **www.contactsotland-bsl.org**

## MALE RELIGIOUS ORDERS

### Marist Brothers Findings

On 10 November, Lady Smith published her findings in relation to the provision of residential care by the Marist Brothers at St Columba's College, Largs, and St Joseph's College, Dumfries between 1950 and 1981. She concluded that children were abused at both boarding schools.

The Inquiry also examined the systems, policies and procedures in place, how these were applied and whether the abuse arose from systemic failures. Lady Smith noted that the Order's contribution to residential childcare in Scotland was one that exposed children to risks of sexual, physical and psychological danger. And for many children, those risks materialised.

Evidential hearings took place between 3 October 2019 to 5 November 2019, during which time the Inquiry heard from 43 witnesses.

The findings from the Marist Brothers case study can be read in full on the Inquiry website: [www.childabuseinquiry.scot](http://www.childabuseinquiry.scot).

*These findings are the third and final within the Male Religious Orders case study series in relation to the provision of residential care for children by male religious orders in Scotland, following the publication of the Christian Brothers and Benedictine's Findings earlier this year.*

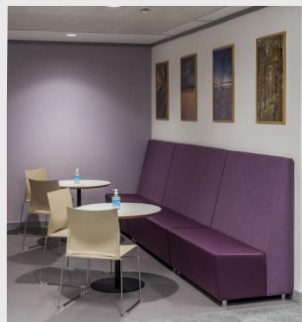
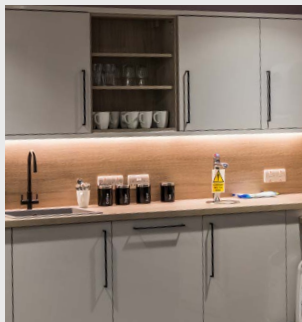




# New Premises

In September this year, the Inquiry moved into new premises at **Mint House, 20 West Register Street**. Centrally located in Edinburgh, just off St Andrew Square with excellent transport links, it provides suitable accommodation for both the Inquiry office and hearing suite space.

The hearings suite, located on the second floor of Mint House, is a welcoming environment. There is seating in the waiting area and facilities to make tea and coffee.



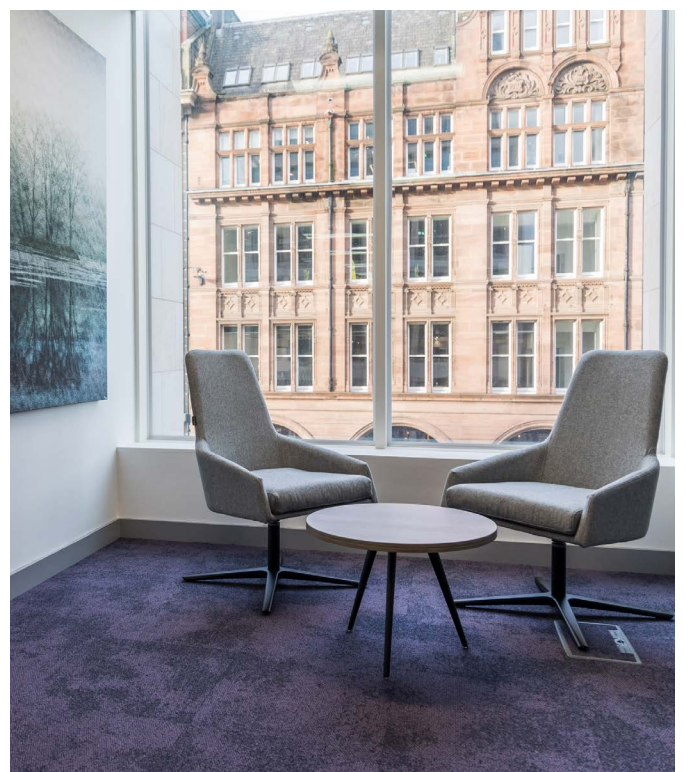
We continue to follow Scottish Government and Public Health Scotland guidance and have a series of measures in place to reduce the risks of spreading infection. This is to keep you, our staff and the wider community safe.

For more information, there is a video on the Inquiry website designed to help you familiarise yourself with the venue before attending hearings. Click the link to view: <https://youtu.be/rNfHl24njxs>



There is also privacy glass in place across all of the windows to ensure people cannot see into the hearings suite from outside, while allowing natural light through.

In the Hearings Room, seating is arranged to ensure that there is as much capacity for members of the public as possible, however, due to safe distancing measures, there is a limited number of seats available. Seating is allocated on a first come, first serve basis. You cannot book seats in advance.



**Q Can I attend hearings at the Inquiry's new venue?**

**A** Members of the public are welcome to attend public hearings at Mint House and sit in the public gallery. Seating is arranged to ensure that that there is as much capacity as possible, however, due to distancing measures, there is a limited number of seats available. Seating is allocated on a first come, first serve basis. You cannot book seats in advance.

**Q Are there Covid measures in place at the Inquiry's new premises?**

**A** A series of measures are in place at Mint House, in line with Scottish Government and Public Health Scotland guidance to help keep everyone safe at hearings.

You must wear a face covering whilst moving around Mint House or within public areas of the building unless you are exempt under Scottish Government guidance. Disposable face coverings will be made available to anyone who needs one. Once seated in the public gallery of the Hearings Room, you may remove your face covering if you choose to.

Upon arrival at the Hearings Suite, you will be asked by a member of staff at the reception desk to use the QR code or provide

your contact details for the NHS Test and Protect service. This is to ensure the NHS contact tracers are able to contact you in the instance that you have come into close contact with someone with symptoms while at the venue. This is for everyone's safety.

Good hand hygiene should continue to be practiced at all times and hand sanitiser is available for use throughout the venue.

**Q Can I speak to someone at the Inquiry while the office is closed over the festive period?**

**A** The Talk to Us phone lines will be closed from 12pm on 24 December 2021 until 10am on Wednesday 5 January 2022. The office will be closed over the Christmas and New Year period. The Witness Support team will respond to any emails or voicemail messages as soon as possible when the office reopens on 5 January 2022.

## Updates

Regular updates will be provided on the Inquiry's website [www.childabuseinquiry.scot](http://www.childabuseinquiry.scot) and via the Inquiry's Twitter account [@ScottishCAI](https://twitter.com/ScottishCAI).

**TALK  
TO US**

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