

# Newsletter

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry



### Foreword

by Lady Smith

The early part of 2022 has been an exceptionally busy period for SCAI and we have achieved much over the last few months.

We concluded the hearings in our case study into Boarding Schools on 17 February 2022, 11 months after they had commenced. With unavoidable delays due to the Covid pandemic and the disruption caused by our office move, the successful completion of these hearings was an important milestone. Work is now underway on the analysis of all the valuable evidence gathered and the drafting of findings.

On 22 and 23 March, we held our first roundtable sessions which you can read more about in this newsletter. Their purpose was to explore aspects of the psychology of those who abuse children with relevant experts in a way that would help me to understand it and to apply that understanding when deciding, at a future date, what recommendations I need to make to protect children in care from abuse. The papers written by the experts in relation to the issues discussed have now been published on our website and my findings will be published shortly.

Our current focus is on the Foster Care Study. The hearings started on 3 May 2022. We have already

heard opening submissions from interested parties and evidence from relevant experts, regulators and providers. Over the coming weeks and months, we will hear further evidence from providers and evidence from applicants about their experiences in foster care. It is expected that the case study hearings will conclude towards the end of the year.

The drafting of volumes and appendices in relation to our Child Migration case study is at an advanced stage. I hope to be able to publish the first of these soon.

Now that Covid restrictions have eased, many of us will be enjoying a return to some normality whilst others, understandably, will be anxious about the continuing risk of becoming ill due to the Covid-19 virus. In this newsletter you will find an article by our expert trauma psychologist that contains some excellent practical tips in relation to emerging from the pandemic and living with ongoing uncertainty.

As ever, I am enormously grateful to counsel and to our dedicated staff for their resilience and flexibility in ensuring that we remain focused on our task. We have a demanding schedule ahead over the summer period but are in a strong position to progress the next phase of our work.

### HEARINGS

#### Foster Care case study

Hearings in relation to the abuse of children in foster care started on 3 May 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 and children who were in kinship care.

Part one of the case study will feature evidence from relevant experts, foster care providers and regulatory bodies to provide context and scene setting. This phase of hearings is expected to last three weeks.

The Inquiry will then hear evidence from individuals who experienced abuse in foster care as well as a range of other witnesses.

The Inquiry's Terms of Reference allows the Inquiry to consider evidence up to 17 December 2014, and which is within living memory of any person who suffered abuse. Foster Care is a substantial case study, and it is expected to run for several months, concluding towards the end of the year.

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#### 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).

On 22 and 23 March 2022, the Inquiry held roundtable sessions at its premises in Edinburgh. The sessions were open to the public.

The purpose of the sessions was to explore aspects of the psychology of those who abuse children with relevant experts to assist Lady Smith when considering how to prevent the abuse of children in care.

The roundtable was convened by Lady Smith and facilitated by Colin MacAulay QC, lead senior counsel to the SCAI. They were supported by Anne McKechnie, forensic clinical psychologist, who was present throughout to provide technical clarification as required.

During the sessions they discussed the characteristics, motivation, and techniques of those who abuse children in care, with focus on the expert participants' knowledge and understanding of the psychology of adult abusers, with a focus on:

- The characteristics of abusers
- Abuse by members of religious orders and whether celibacy is relevant
- Denial, minimisation, and acceptance by abusers
- Abuse by individuals and abuse by groups
- The differing treatment of children within the same care setting
- The role of attachment
- Grooming of children by abusers
- Whether victims of abuse are more likely than others to become abusers
- Risk, recruitment and training with a view to protecting children from abuse

Reports provided by experts are available on the Inquiry's website. Lady Smith's findings from the roundtable will be published shortly.



## Boarding Schools case study

The case study into Boarding Schools concluded on 17 February 2022 with closing submissions, following evidence relating to Loretto School in Musselburgh, Morrison's Academy in Crieff (during the time it was a boarding school), Queen Victoria School in Dunblane, Fettes College in Edinburgh, Gordonstoun School in Elgin, Keil School in Dumbarton and Merchiston Castle School in Edinburgh.


Evidence from over 220 witnesses was heard both in-person (at the Inquiry's previous premises at Rosebery House and at the Inquiry's new premises, Mint House), as well as remotely via video-link. A number of statements were also read in as part of the hearings.


The Boarding Schools case study was substantial and, in addition to a substantial volume of witness evidence, has involved considering over 20,000 documents to date. The Inquiry looked in detail at what happened, not only in the seven schools named as investigations, but at the associated prep schools and regulatory bodies involved. The analysis of the extensive evidence and drafting of findings is underway.




### 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**

## Development of Children’s Care Services in Scotland

In March, the Inquiry published a report by Professor Andy Kendrick, Erin Lux, Sharon McGregor and Richard Withington, examining the establishment, nature and development of a wide range of services providing out-of-home care for children and young people in Scotland, from 1900 to the present day.

The breadth and nature of services have changed markedly during this time, and the report identifies developments in good practice and systemic weaknesses, while considering the changing nature and needs of the child care population.

Despite a general improvement in the quality of services, the authors conclude that some looked after children and young people still have poor experiences of the care system, and face stigma and discrimination.

The full report can be downloaded from the Inquiry website:  
[www.childabuseinquiry.scot/research/research-reports/development-of-childrens-care-services-in-scotland/](http://www.childabuseinquiry.scot/research/research-reports/development-of-childrens-care-services-in-scotland/)



### Abuse in foster care: a review of the research

In April, the Inquiry published a report by Professor Nina Biehal and Doctor Maggie Grant reviewing the UK and international evidence to provide a comprehensive account of the research on maltreatment in foster care.

The report finds that few official inquiries and reviews have referred specifically to foster care, and that few studies have investigated the question of maltreatment in foster care in Scotland.

The authors argue that research considering the risk and protective factors for abuse in the Scottish fostering system, taking account of the specific policy and legal landscape in Scotland, is required, and note that children’s voices were absent from the majority of the studies they identified.

The full report can be downloaded from the Inquiry website:  
[www.childabuseinquiry.scot/research/research-reports/abuse-in-foster-care-a-review-of-the-research/](http://www.childabuseinquiry.scot/research/research-reports/abuse-in-foster-care-a-review-of-the-research/)

## CASE STUDY FINDINGS

### Child Migration

Two volumes have been drafted and are being prepared for publication. Further information will be available shortly.



## REDRESS

### SCAI statement on the Redress scheme

In response to recent queries relating to redress, SCAI would like to clarify the following:

The Inquiries Act 2005 expressly prohibits the Chair from ruling on or awarding compensation and, likewise, she has no power to award or be involved in the administration, decision making, or giving of advice in relation to redress payments. The Inquiry does not administer or operate Scotland’s redress scheme. The administration of the scheme is run by Scottish Government and Redress Scotland is responsible for making determinations in connection with applications to the redress scheme and advising Scottish Ministers of their determinations once made. The Inquiry is independent of both Scottish Government and Redress Scotland. Further information is available at [Apply for Scotland’s Redress Scheme - mygov.scot](http://Apply for Scotland’s Redress Scheme - mygov.scot) and [Redress Scotland](http://Redress Scotland) .

Individual claims for redress do not fall within the Inquiry’s Terms of Reference. This means that Lady Smith cannot share inquiry evidence that is not available on SCAI’s website, for redress purposes. She cannot share such evidence with Scottish Government or with Redress Scotland. This includes Inquiry statements.

# Coping with the easing of Covid restrictions

As Covid restrictions have eased, many of us are looking forward to returning to our former ways of life. While for some this may be welcomed and celebrated, for others the trauma of the last two years will cast a long shadow.

The Covid pandemic has been globally recognised as a traumatic event; it was potentially life threatening, unpredictable and many of us were deprived of our usual coping strategies as work and social networks were closed to us. Social isolation was a fact of life for many, others were faced with the challenges of managing work and home-schooling children. We were all faced with challenges while others, sadly, faced tragic loss.

Traumatic events can affect your mental health and well-being and this is more severe when that trauma is prolonged, unpredictable and apparently without end.

The impact will vary from one person to another: some were angry, some resigned and patient, others withdrew from the world, and many surrounded themselves with friends who shared similar interests and beliefs, often shunning those who were not like-minded. Whilst we all were faced with the same event, our reactions differed based on our previous experiences.

For those with experience of childhood trauma, this may have led to a resurgence of familiar and distressing emotions; fear of death for ourselves or loved ones, lack of trust, restricted activities and uncertainty as to how and when the trauma would end. Coping skills have been stretched and tested and we will not all emerge from this trauma at the same time and in the same way. However, there are things that we can do to help us ease back into "normality" and to build resilience along the way.

## Some tips:

- Prioritise time to sleep and relax
- The pandemic has taught us that contact and relationships with others are vital to our wellbeing. As we leave restrictions, take your time when reconnecting, keep interactions short if you feel overwhelmed and recognise that moving back into any social life may be exhausting so make sure you take time to rest
- Do increase contact with people where you feel valued and safe
- Eat well, exercise within your capabilities, making lots of time for the activities you enjoy
- If anyone is anxious and still afraid, they should not be rushed back to normal life. Taking time, making small steps while acknowledging fear and anxiety will be helpful as well as ensuring they have access to support
- Any fear or anxiety is best overcome in small careful steps with lots of time for self-care built in. If you are anxious, for example, about using public transport, break down the task into small manageable chunks to be practiced over several steps. For example, go to the train station when it is quiet and simply stand there for 5 minutes. Progress to going on short journeys. Take necessary precautions and limit contact with others by taking transport outside peak times. It is also cheaper then! After each practice, reward yourself by doing something you enjoy, congratulate yourself on your resilience building and look forward to the day when you can travel comfortably again.
- Pick up an old hobby or develop a new skill to help in turn build self-esteem
- Finally look back on the last two years and consider if there are things you have done or learned about yourself that you can take with you moving forward.

**Above all, remember that bad times can pass and may leave us stronger and more resilient than we were before.**


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