

| Aberlour Orphanage & Aberlour
Child Care Trust: 1930s to 1990s

Report for the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

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October 2019

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Overview

The Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry (SCAI) commissioned us to review a selection of records pertaining to Aberlour, Quarrier's Homes, and Barnardo's. This examination was conducted in order to assess the extent to which available and surviving records indicate the existence or otherwise of systems or processes in respect of: staff recruitment, induction, qualifications, and training; discipline and punishment; the handling of complaints; internal and external monitoring; and reviews of placements; and aftercare during the period c.1930-1990.

The research for all three providers was carried out in a period of three months between September and December 2018. The limited time and resources available to conduct the research imposed some constraints on the extent and range of the records that could reasonably be consulted. Thus, the research focused overwhelmingly on a sample of records made available to the Inquiry by the providers, supplemented by some additional sources located by the authors elsewhere (records held by the National Records of Scotland and material located in a number of newspapers).

We should note that some records have been destroyed by the providers under the auspices of the Data Protection Act. It is also likely that some records have been lost or destroyed at some time in the past. In respect of Aberlour, we must presume this includes personnel records in relation to staff appointments: we were not provided with this type of data.

Records Consulted

The documents reviewed included:

1. Children's Admission Forms and Case Files

These comprised five case files, randomly selected by Aberlour, from each decade from 1930s-1980s, plus individual case files pertaining to 20 children provided to the Inquiry by Aberlour. These contain admission forms and various notes of reviews undertaken recording the child's care by Aberlour.

2. Minute Books

The Minute Books comprise handwritten minutes of Management Committee meetings and meetings of the Governing Body. These are occasionally interspersed with other sub-committee minutes (e.g. Farm Committee, Finance Committee, and occasionally other special sub-committees). Minute books occasionally contain printed reports of Annual General Meetings.

We consulted:

- a) extracts (generally one or two pages) from Management Committee Minute Books provided to the Inquiry by Aberlour
- b) The physical Minute books maintained by Aberlour Child Care Trust. Handwritten notes were taken from some Minute Books c.1935-1962. Minute books exist for 1970s-1990s, but time constraints prevented us from consulting these. They had not been digitised and photography of records was not permitted.

3. Annual Reports

Digitised extracts (selected pages) from Annual Reports from 1930s-1960 provided to the Inquiry by Aberlour. We did not have access to a full run of Annual Reports for the period in question. It is unclear whether these have survived.

4. Inspection Reports

These comprise reports undertaken by officials of the Scottish Office (Scottish Home Department and Scottish Education Department) following official inspections. These records are held by the National Records of Scotland (NRS). Beyond occasional, brief mentions of such visits in management minutes, we did not locate records held by Aberlour pertaining to these inspections.

5. Correspondence with Local Authorities and the Scottish Office

Some extant government files contain large amounts of miscellaneous correspondence, departmental minutes and related reports concerning childcare services provided by Aberlour. Where we have located and used such material because the content is relevant, we have endeavoured to describe its provenance, or likely provenance, as clearly as possible in associated footnotes.

6. The Orphanage Magazine

A few copies of the magazine were consulted. We did not have a full run of the magazine and it is unclear whether a more fulsome archive of back copies has survived within Aberlour's records.

7. Newspapers

We carried out an online search of selected newspapers in order to identify advertisements seeking to recruit staff, as well as relevant news items and notices pertaining to this organisation. This search was not comprehensive given constraints on time and was restricted to those newspapers digitised and searchable via the online portal *The British Newspaper Archive*.

8. Miscellaneous

Additional materials were consulted and reference to these made where it was thought the material therein would enhance the research findings. Examples include an oral history interview, in possession of the researchers, undertaken with a former Aberlour child.

Access

We or the Inquiry met or corresponded with gatekeepers to ensure they understood the remit of the research and the report and to satisfy their concerns about confidentiality.

Not all available records were consulted. For example, whilst we had access to some Aberlour Minute Books for the 1970s-1990s, time constraints meant that detailed analysis was limited to those covering the period 1930s to early 1960s. We are aware that social work case files exist in local authority archives for children in care looked after by Aberlour; we did not attempt to locate these owing to time and resource limitations.

Digitised and scanned materials have often been partial (for instance a single page from a minute book) or produced in such a way that makes reading the materials on screen extremely difficult. Documents within case files have often not been placed in chronological order before scanning, making it impossible to read a child's journey through the institution on screen, especially when some case records are over 100 pages in length. The confidentiality of the materials meant printing was not advisable. Moreover, in the instance of case files provided by Aberlour for the random sample of five files per decade, names have been redacted prior to scanning.

In cases of files containing the case histories of siblings, the redaction means it is very difficult to make an assessment as to which child an individual document refers.

It is important to emphasise here the constraints and limitations of historical records. Historical records are not finite, but neither are they comprehensive owing to past decisions taken regarding records management (retention, weeding, and storage). The time and resource restraints pertaining to this research meant that we could not consult *all* records that may exist. Where it was difficult to identify from the records available whether a system or process existed, we endeavoured to find evidence that there was a consistent or generally understood approach to an issue. Where systems were identified, we endeavoured to assess whether the records indicate that they were implemented.

Question 1: Staff Recruitment, Qualifications, and In-Service Training Initiatives

Overview

The Aberlour orphanage was founded in 1875 by Canon Jupp, with the support of the Scottish Episcopal Church.

Religion continued to be part of their social mission until the orphanage's closure. 'Training' of children was the institution's ambition; this included an early introduction into domestic work for girls and manual labour for boys.

At the beginning of the 1930s, Aberlour had somewhere in the region of 450 beds. Once they were past toddlerhood, children were separated by age and sex into individual groups and staffing of the orphanage reflected these divisions—being segregated into 'houses'. Each group was the charge of a housemaster (for groups of boys 12 years and over) or housemistress (for groups of girls or groups of younger boys). It is unclear how many houses there were in total during the interwar period, but by the 1950s, eight houses were operating. The nursery school was additional. The orphanage also acquired a holiday home on the Moray coast—Hopeman—in the 1930s. Children from the orphanage went there in groups accompanied by orphanage staff, but resident staff were also employed during the summer months.¹ Two significant fires (in 1931 and 1937) destroyed property and as a result the overall child population was reduced. By the post-war period, the numbers of children varied between 300 and 350.²

By the 1930s, the orphanage was essentially divided into three integrated children's services: a home for boys, one for girls, and a school. These three facilities all required staff made up of child carers; auxiliary workers such as cooks, laundresses, gardeners, janitors, and other tradesmen; teachers for the school; and a small staff of administrative workers. In the timeframe between 1930-1960, the numbers of staff in employment at any one time who had direct responsibility for children are unknown,

¹ NRS ED11/442/2: *Aberlour Orphanage Holiday Home*. See notes of inspections of this home [SGV.001.002.6034-45].

² NRS ED11/443: *Aberlour Orphanage, Aberlour, Banffshire Annual Returns 1934-*; Annual Returns submitted September 1948 show 342 children in residence [SGV.001.002.4649-50].

but this may have been between 40 and 50 adult workers.³ Most childcare workers were resident (though some schoolteachers and domestics lived locally).

A hospital facility existed in both homes and these employed nurses and nursing assistants, as did a small nursery that looked after babies and toddlers. The orphanage also maintained its own adjacent farm that supplied the facility with milk and other produce. Farm workers, including a farm manager, were resident, and older boys contributed to agricultural labour.

During and after the war, among the increase in children needing residential care the highest levels were seen in very young children, including babies. Aberlour had long had ambitions to build a new nursery facility and were probably also aware of the contemporary demand. Fundraising was described as a post-war thanksgiving gesture, in aid of establishing a residential nursery school in new premises at Aberlour. This ambition was fulfilled and a 30-bed facility for babies and children under five-years opened in 1952 in a building called the 'Dowans'. It was formally opened the following year by Princess Margaret and renamed as the Princess Margaret Nursery. In 1953, younger children from the orphanage, as well as some new admissions, were placed in the new nursery before it had been formally registered. When Scottish Home Department inspectors did pay a pre-registration visit in 1954 they were generally impressed with what they saw. Somewhat unusually, this facility, which was a residential one, was headed by a trained teacher. She had a small staff under her, but this usually included either a qualified nurse and/or nursery nurse as well as several assistants. The Princess Margaret Nursery School fell into a grey area in respect of oversight, but it was eventually resolved that it would be treated by the Scottish Office as a separate unit and subject to inspection by both Home and Education Departments.

The character of the orphanage was almost a type of residential, vocational school that prepared children for working lives in agriculture and domestic service. In this way, the labour of resident children propped up an ailing system of poor wages among a staff where retention was a significant problem and labour shortages were chronic. In the 1940s one former staff member commented:

Now there are 28 to 30 girls known as "working girls", 13 - 17 years. They also do excessive work. They get paid at 13 years the handsome sum of 1/- per week

³ We have not been provided with suitable records from within the Aberlour archive with which to judge this more accurately.

rising to 2/6d., 5/- as they get older at 17 they are supposed to get 5/- and 5/- for certificates. They pay for all breakages, are fined 1/- every time they speak back or are defiant.

In the world these girls would get £2. 10/-. If this is not Child Labour at its very worst then I don't know what is.⁴

During the 1950s, the child population of the orphanage decreased. The decrease is noted in minutes of the governing body's meeting in April 1955 when 228 children were in residence.⁵ By the end of 1960, the numbers had dropped to under 200 (179 in the orphanage and 14 in the nursery department).⁶

In 1961, following the issue of the Scottish Advisory Council's *Report on Voluntary Homes*,⁷ the Warden produced a written response for the attention of the Governors and Management Committee in which it was stated:

In para. 20, principles are outlined of which note must be taken. In this paragraph, note iii lays down a principle with which all must agree "Those in care of voluntary organisations should be provided with an environment as similar as possible to normal family life." At the present time, as the majority of children in the Orphanage are local authority placings, and a decreasing number are admitted by private arrangements, the question of boarding out is, for the Orphanage, a question of comparatively little moment.

There appears to be little doubt that most voluntary homes will give careful consideration to the possibility of increasing charges to local authorities as well as seizing the opportunity offered of obtaining grants for improvements. It may be felt that those homes which do not accept the lead thus given will eventually

⁴ NRS ED11/443: *Aberlour Orphanage, Aberlour, Banffshire Annual Returns 1934-*; Letter from Miss Somerville dated 12 April 1946, addressed to Mr Cumming Forsyth, general secretary of the RSSPCC and forwarded by the latter to Mr Hewitson Brown of the Scottish Home Department 22 April 1946 [SGV.001.002.4820].

⁵ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 28 April 1955 [ABE.001.006.6678]. The Aberlour minute books contain handwritten entries up until 1962 when typewritten minutes were introduced. In earlier, handwritten records for the orphanage, the minute books contain minutes of meetings of the Management Committee, those of the Governing Body meetings, and also, numerous other sub-committee minutes e.g. a finance committee, a farm committee and other sundry short-lived sub-committees. Management committee meetings were most frequent and took place every one to two months. Meetings of the Governing Body appear to have been roughly quarterly. Other sub-committee meetings were more irregular.

⁶ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 17 November 1960 [ABE.001.006.6596].

⁷ Scottish Education Department, *Scottish Advisory Council on Child Care: Report on Voluntary Homes* (Edinburgh, 1961).

fall so far behind a rising standard that they could be faced with eventual closure.⁸

At a meeting of the Governing Body the options of whether to improve on and continue with the current model of delivery of care or to replace 'the orphanage as it is today by a series of smaller homes dispersed in different parts of the country' was considered.⁹ A survey undertaken by one of the Aberlour governors concluded that whatever improvements were made at the orphanage, they would still face staffing problems because of the orphanage's 'somewhat isolated position'.¹⁰ Thus, during the early 1960s, Aberlour began to transition its services away from the orphanage to family-size homes; these were headed by houseparents assisted by deputies, relief staff, and domestic workers. Of note is that what may have tipped the balance in favour of this radical step was the long running issue of staffing—the Advisory Council's *Report on Voluntary Homes* had been emphatic that improvements needed to be made in this area.¹¹

Aberlour's long-serving and well-known Warden—Dean Wolfe— left the orphanage in 1958 and was succeeded in this post by the Rev. Leslie who proved to be an innovator. It was under Leslie's leadership that governors were persuaded that children in the care of Aberlour required improved conditions 'materially as well as spiritually', thus making way for the eventual closure of the orphanage.¹² Soon after Leslie came into post, he stressed that good relations with local authorities must be fostered and a spirit of working with them, rather than in 'competition' was necessary.¹³ He also said that psychiatric services within the orphanage were 'not very satisfactory' and appeared to recognise that services needed to be improved for children labelled at the time as being 'maladjusted'.¹⁴

The transition towards a new model of care provision—whilst backed by the chair of the board of governors, and Aberlour's Warden, and Sub-Warden—was not seamless. A civil servant in the Scottish Education Department stated in early 1967

⁸ Aberlour Orphanage, Aberlour Banffshire, *To the Governors and members of the Management Committee of Aberlour Orphanage, "The Role of Voluntary Homes"*, dated March 1961 [ABE.001.001.0280].

⁹ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 23 March 1961 [ABE.001.006.6598].

¹⁰ General Report on Aberlour Orphanage: Preliminary Survey (1961) [ABE.001.006.6601].

¹¹ Scottish Education Department, *Scottish Advisory Council on Child Care: Report on Voluntary Homes* (Edinburgh, 1961).

¹² Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 23 April 1959 [ABE.001.006.6609].

¹³ *Ibid.*, [ABE.001.006.6609].

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, [ABE.001.006.6609].

that amendments to the Aberlour Trust agreement needed to be made quickly otherwise 'a small minority of the Governors [who] are still in favour of the institutional pattern' would have 'a ready excuse to procrastinate'.¹⁵ Others disapproved of amendments to the Trust's constitution as this involved some loosening of its ties with the Episcopal Church. For example, Bishop Duncan Macinnes, head of the Episcopal Diocese of Moray, Ross, and Caithness, publicly voiced his concern that '[i]n times to come there could be a man in charge of the orphanage homes who was not even a Christian, but a Mohammedan'.¹⁶

By 1967, all children had either been discharged or transferred out of the orphanage into small group homes across Scotland. The last of the orphanage children moved out in September 1967 and were placed in the Trust's new small home in Kirkcaldy.¹⁷ The orphanage buildings and its lands were sold and the management of Aberlour relocated, initially to offices in Aberdeen (then, in the mid-1970s, to Stirling). By the end of 1969, Aberlour had three homes in Aberdeen, and others in Bucksburn, Bridge of Don, Keith, and Aberlour, as well as homes in Dunfermline, Kirkcaldy, and Cumbernauld.¹⁸ Over the course of the next decade, the Aberlour Trust, as it became known in 1968, opened children's homes across the northeast and central Scotland, each caring for between eight and 20 children. These homes were staffed by houseparents (usually married couples or single women), assistant housemothers, and domestic assistants. Additionally, a hierarchy of managers were employed to oversee care, including—from 1969—a principal and depute principal, and—beginning in the early 1970s—professional social workers. By the 1970s, Aberlour had opened eleven residential homes in the northeast and central belt of Scotland, housing a total of around 100 children at any given time. Later transitions away from this model involved the opening of specialist services to single mothers, children with disabilities, and family centres.

With regards the operational organisation within Aberlour, the available documentation does not provide a clear picture of the exact staffing structure of the orphanage during the earlier period under consideration. Oversight of the

¹⁵ NRS ED57/250: *Educational Trusts, 1967-1968*, letter to Mr. W. G. Robertson from Miss Graham (SED) dated 2 February 1967 [SGV.001.004.6443-5].

¹⁶ Reported in *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 21 October 1968, p. 7; the occasion where the Bishop made this remark was the unveiling of a plaque in memory of Dean Wolfe, former Warden of the Orphanage, in the church at Aberlour.

¹⁷ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 29 September 1967 [ABE.001.006.6681].

¹⁸ 'Santa Seldom Visits Broken Homes: That's Why We Want You to Help Aberlour Families', *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 11 December 1969, p. 2.

orphanage was invested in a Warden who, until 1969, was always a clergyman from the Scottish Episcopal Church. Besides the Warden, sometimes a 'Sub-Warden' was appointed who deputised for the head, did some religious instruction, and oversaw the boys' home.¹⁹ In overall charge of female children, younger boys, and a mixed-sex nursery was a 'Lady Superintendent'.

The older boys' houses were staffed by housemasters. In 1947 there were three of these, one of whom was responsible for sports.²⁰ Overall, the duties of housemasters included the administration of discipline, allocating and overseeing chores done by children, and being 'responsible for the cleanliness of the Children, Dormitories, Dayroom and for other duties as may reasonably be required from time to time in an emergency.'²¹ The post of housemaster sometimes involved responsibility for games and sports, but not teaching—although there is lack of clarity about whether this was *always* the case. These men were answerable to the Warden and Sub-Warden.

Their female equivalents, often referred to as matrons, assistant matrons, housemothers, or housemistresses, operated in the girls' homes looking after age-segregated groups of girls, and in the boys' home caring for groups of younger boys. They also had to be responsible for sewing. Matrons were answerable to the female superintendent and her deputy. According to the 'Rules and Regulations' produced by Aberlour sometime in the 1940s, under the lady superintendent was a 'Deputy Lady Superintendent and Two Assistant Housekeepers...to whom the Lady Superintendent may delegate duties as thought fit.'²² An inspection of the orphanage carried out by the Scottish Office in 1948 indicates that there was a lack of clarity about the staffing structure at Aberlour.²³

In so far as the role of childcare workers is ever described this was stated to be a typical day:

¹⁹ Generally, incumbents of this role might be junior clergy and they moved on with regularity, so it was often a vacant post.

²⁰ NRS ED11/443: *Aberlour Orphanage*, Report of an inspection visit dated 16 October 1947 [SGV.001.002.4675-6].

²¹ *Ibid.*, 'Aberlour Orphanage Rules and Regulations and Some Notes and Suggestions for the Information of the Staff' (no date, c.1940s) [SGV.001.002.4665].

²² *Ibid.* [SGV.001.002.4663].

²³ NRS ED11/443: *Aberlour Orphanage*, Home Department minute dated 24 December 1948, recounting findings from a recent visit of inspection [SGV.001.002.4636-7].

Mistresses in Junior Dayrooms are responsible for Children's Mending and General Supervision of their Clothes (Bed Linen and Household Linen is repaired in the Linen Room).

7.00 a.m. Children Rise.

7.45 a.m. Children's Breakfast.

8.50 a.m. School.

8.50 a.m. to 12 mid-day. Matron's Duties include Dining Hall, Sewing, Knitting and General Supervision of her Department. All H.M.s share Cutting and Distributing of Bread and Butter Daily.

12.15 p.m. Children's Dinner.

1.30 p.m. Children back to School.

1.45 to 3.30 p.m. H.M.s Free except during School Holidays.

3.45 p.m. Help prepare Children's Tea.

4.15 p.m. Children Home from School.

5.00 p.m. Children's Tea.

5.30 p.m. Summer-Games and Walks with the Children. Winter-Reading, Indoor Games and Organised Amusements.

6.30 to 9.15 p.m. Bed-time according to Age of Children.

One Whole Day off duty each week after Breakfast. Sixteen Days' Holiday with pay during the year which will be given after six months' service. (The sixteen days include travelling days.) Under no circumstances can a normal day off be added to Annual Holiday. As occasion arises an Extra Half Day off Duty may be given on a Sunday and Once a Month a Half Day is added to the Weekly Day Off.²⁴

Not mentioned here, but included elsewhere in rules and regulations, is that matrons were responsible for allocating and overseeing the domestic work and self-care done by children:

²⁴ NRS ED11/443: 'Aberlour Orphanage Rules and Regulations and Some Notes and Suggestions for the Information of the Staff' (no date, c1940s) [SGV.001.002.4653].

A Time Table must be made out as follows: - Boys or girls should be divided into sections or groups for such tasks as boot-cleaning, bedmaking, washing and bathing. The H.M. is responsible for arranging that these should not be done in haphazard fashion.²⁵

Housemistresses also had to inspect the work done by children daily and keep a record of punishments (see question 2).

The nursery was overseen by a nurse, an assistant, and a trainee; sick children were also looked after by trained nurses within both homes. It is presumed that these, too, were managed by the female superintendent.

Staff recruitment

c.1930-1950

Aberlour experienced very significant problems with recruitment across this timeframe and it is likely that all possible means were utilised to recruit, depending on the post in question. As an Episcopalian organisation, the church may have been a useful means of recruiting by word of mouth; the same likely applied in the locality, given its rural backdrop and small population.

Advertisements for childcare positions during this period more commonly sought women, with regular advertising for staff positions that required younger applicants with some experience of child care. For example:

MATRON wanted for charge of 36 boys, aged 11; duties: supervision, discipline, sewing, &c.; must have had experience with children; under 40; cub mistress welcomed; wages £45 plus board, &c. Apply Warden, Orphanage, Aberlour.²⁶

Later in the year we see the same job advertised once again, suggesting that the post had not been filled, or that the appointee had not stayed long.²⁷ It is among matrons that we possibly see the highest turnover of staff.

²⁵ Ibid. [SGV.001.002.4664].

²⁶ *The Scotsman* 16 January 1932, p. 5.

²⁷ *The Scotsman*, 9 July 1932, p. 5.

Other posts incurred similar attrition. In 1936, one appointee for the post of deputy superintendent stayed for only one month.²⁸ The position of lady superintendent became vacant twice between 1935 and 1936.

THE ORPHANAGE ABERLOUR (Episcopalian)

Applications are invited for the post of LADY SUPERINTENDENT of the above Institution, which provides a home for 450 orphaned children.

Candidates must have thorough and wide experience in work amongst and in training of girls and be competent to manage the domestic side of the Orphanage under the supervision of the Warden.

The services of a housekeeper will be provided.

Salary £120-£150 plus furnished rooms, board, etc. Application to be made with copies only (not returnable) of not less than two testimonials before Thursday 26th September...²⁹

A female superintendent was appointed whose background was 'as Lady Superintendent of the Halifax Blue Coat School for girls and also the Liverpool Orphanage for boys'.³⁰ This apparently experienced worker did not remain, and the position was again vacated a few months later and a new appointment made in March 1936.³¹ This superintendent was also short-lived—she was asked to resign on account of 'disregarding of rules and regulations' and 'a general spirit of disloyalty and antagonism'.³² We have no note of how many times this post was vacant again over the proceeding few years, but it was certainly advertised once more in 1941 and again in 1945.³³ This type of residential post was particularly challenging, with one inspector commenting in 1947 that, 'she is never done. She has practically no time off duty and appears to work night and day because of the shortage of labour.'³⁴ In 1948, the orphanage appointed a new lady superintendent who came from Quarrier's

²⁸ Aberlour Minute Book 3, entry dated 18 Sept 1936, consulted at Aberlour Headquarters in December 2018.

²⁹ *The Scotsman*, 14 September 1935, p.20; appointment noted in Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 21 October 1935.

³⁰ Aberlour Minute Book 3, entry dated 21 October 1935, consulted at Aberlour Headquarters in December 2018.

³¹ Aberlour Minute Book 3, entry dated 13 March 1936, consulted at Aberlour Headquarters in December 2018.

³² Aberlour Minute Book 3, entry dated 10 December 1936, consulted at Aberlour Headquarters in December 2018.

³³ *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 19 November 1941, p.4.

³⁴ NRS ED11/443: report of an unannounced inspection visit, dated 23 April 1947 [SGV.001.002.4690].

Homes and was said to 'have familiarised her with the problems and duties she would have to face at Aberlour.'³⁵

Newspaper advertisements placed during this period include requests for experienced workers and/or applicants with particular skills to offer, such as proficiency in sewing or experience of leadership within youth organisations. In addition, those applying for more senior posts and professional roles were required to submit testimonials and there is some evidence suggesting that these were supplied.³⁶ Advertisements for more junior positions do not state references as a requirement and we have no evidence that these were demanded.

During the 1930s, most childcare positions required some previous experience 'of children' but the nature of this is never stipulated. In 1934, an advertisement for the post of 'assistant matron' indicates that this post now attracted the same remuneration as that paid to a Matron two years earlier.

ASSISTANT MATRON (WORKING) for girls (aged 5-8). Good needlewoman essential. Salary £45. Full particulars to Miss McKee, The Orphanage, Aberlour Speyside.³⁷

For this role, the skill deemed most important was needlework. During the war years we see more advertisements for the girls' home stipulating 'motherly' qualities were wanted in staff, in one advertisement this is stated as: 'a wise admixture of affection and discipline'.³⁸

During the war years Aberlour advertised frequently for staff, with a continued preference for young female workers. For example:

WANTED, SENIOR NURSERY NURSE, aged about 30: salary according to experience. Also JUNIOR NURSERY NURSE, aged about 20 (one year's nursery training provided). Apply Lady Superintendent...³⁹

³⁵ Aberlour Minute Book 6, entry dated 26 May 1948, consulted at Aberlour Headquarters in December 2018.

³⁶ Aberlour Minute Book 3, entry dated 21 October 1935, consulted at Aberlour Headquarters in December 2018.

³⁷ *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 3 October 1934, p. 1.

³⁸ *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 7 February 1944, p. 3.

³⁹ *The Scotsman*, 1 January 1941, p. 1.

Where housemaster positions are concerned, rather fewer advertisements have been recovered. It is unclear why this is the case. During the war years a few notices were placed. For example:

ABERLOUR ORPHANAGE BANFFSHIRE. HOUSEMASTER required in January for supervision of forty boys, aged 12 to 14. Disciplinarian and interest in games. No teaching. Suit discharged soldier. Salary £96, plus board, laundry etc. Apply with references to THE WARDEN.⁴⁰

Of note, is the age range of the children under the care of the housemaster—12-year-old boys were evidently only in need of supervision rather than care—and the large number of boys who were the charge of a single housefather.

One of the key qualities expected of Housemasters, as the example above illustrates, is that of being a 'disciplinarian' and some adverts specifically mention a military background as advantageous:

HOUSEMASTER (single), residential post, for supervision of senior boys. Qualities: leadership essential. Scouting or youth work a recommendation. Would suit a demob. n.c.o. Further particulars apply Canon Wolfe, Orphanage Aberlour.⁴¹

As we can see, this post continued to be aimed at single men and their responsibility was for older boys.

Other recruitment notices (including those for female staff) stressed the ability to exercise discipline:

ABERLOUR ORPHANAGE has the following vacancies: (1) Housekeeper-Assistant to Lady Superintendent; preference to applicant with institutional experience; salary £90-£120 with board-residence and laundry. (2) House Mistress for supervision of girls; fond of children and good disciplinarian; salary £70-£90 according to experience. (3) Relief House Mistress for supervision of boys, salary £70-£90...⁴²

This accent on being a 'good disciplinarian' can also be seen in recruitment notices for Quarrier's Homes around this time.

⁴⁰ *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 8 December 1942, p. 3

⁴¹ *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 16 May 1946, p. 4.

⁴² *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, Thursday 01 November 1945, p. 5

Throughout the 1930s, Aberlour advertised for many types of female staff, including assistant nurses, cooks, and laundry workers:

EXPERIENCED Second Laundress: small steam laundry: good wages: resident post. Apply Lady Superintendent. Aberlour Orphanage, Banffshire.⁴³

In 1940, the senior post was advertised:

WANTED experienced Head Laundress with knowledge all branches of laundry work and machinery; capable of training young maids; salary £65-£75, according to experience. Apply with last employer's name for reference, to the Lady Superintendent, Aberlour Orphanage.⁴⁴

For this position, some experience of giving instruction was desired. The trainees were likely orphanage girls being schooled for future domestic employment.

Recruitment and retention of staff was also an issue at the school.⁴⁵ Advertisements for teachers were frequent, some specifying the ability to teach 'backward children'.⁴⁶ There were also issues with staff retention here. An entry in the minutes for a board of management meeting in 1936 notes unsatisfactory performance by three female teachers and the board, after consulting with school managers, proposed to terminate employment of the three.⁴⁷ In 1948, a schoolmaster, supported by another on the school staff, accused the [REDACTED] teacher of ill-treatment of children. The Aberlour Board of Governors resolved the situation by sacking the [REDACTED] teacher and his two accusers.⁴⁸

In the immediate post-war years staff shortages remained a huge difficulty. Scottish Office Home Department minutes remark that 'the crux of the problem at Aberlour, as elsewhere, was quite obviously staff'.⁴⁹ In the context of widespread staff

⁴³ *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 7 September 1939, p. 7.

⁴⁴ *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 27 March 1940, p. 5.

⁴⁵ It should be noted that, unlike Quarrier's, Aberlour retained control over the recruitment of teachers. Following a stand-off between the Warden and Banffshire County Council in 1921 the local authority agreed to pay Aberlour a grant towards the orphanage children's education – the amount and timing of payment remained a contentious issue for many years.

⁴⁶ See for example, *The Scotsman*, 3 March 1944, p. 1.

⁴⁷ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 13 March 1936, consulted at Aberlour Headquarters in December 2018.

⁴⁸ NRS ED11/443: Internal Home Department minute initialled by Hewitson- Brown, dated 6 February 1948 [SGV.001.002.4634].

⁴⁹ Ibid: minute dated 24 December 1948 concerning Mr Cunningham's visit to Aberlour [SGV.001.002.4637].

shortages in child care generally in Scotland, we see Aberlour expanding its recruitment net. Advertisements appeared in the North of England press:

ABERLOUR ORPHANAGE has the following vacancies: (1) Housekeeper-Assistant to the Lady Superintendent; preference to applicant with institutional experience; salary £90-£120 with board-residence and laundry. (2) House Mistress for supervision of girls; fond of children and good disciplinarian; salary £70-£90 according to experience. (3) Relief House Mistress for supervision of boys, salary £70-£90. Permission Ministry of Labour obtainable. Each Post Subject to Local Government Superannuation, The Orphanage Aberlour...⁵⁰

Advertisements such as this, placed in the *Yorkshire Post*, continued into the 1950s. The fact that even domestic work was advertised externally suggests that the orphanage was unable to recruit locally for such posts.

Since its foundation, the person in charge at Aberlour Orphanage was a clergyman; there is evidence too that other posts were filled by members of the Episcopal clergy. When a new rector was appointed to the cathedral at Brechin in 1941, a description of the career of the Rev. J. F. Dale Chapman included details of time he spent as a housemaster in charge of 'senior boys' at Aberlour. He was offered the post of 'Sub-Warden' but chose instead to take up parochial work.⁵¹

While recruitment notices placed in Scotland rarely specify religious affiliation, given the strong religious character of this institution, it is almost certain that preference would have been given to declared Christians with a live church connection within a Protestant denomination. This preference is corroborated by management committee minutes noting that applications for the lady superintendent post should be restricted to Anglicans.⁵² We see this stated explicitly as in the notice below:

LADY SUPERINTENDENT required at Aberlour Orphanage, Banffshire on July 1st 1948. Duties comprise the supervision and guidance of staff caring for the children, domestic administration, supervision of menus, stocktaking of linen, clothing etc.; special qualifications will be expected in the training of senior girls from 13 to 17 years old; there are some 350 children in residence and 45 resident

⁵⁰ *Yorkshire Post*, 1 November 1945, p. 5.

⁵¹ 'Rev. Canon McHugh to Retire: Appointment of Successor', *Brechin Advertiser*, 25 November 1941; Rev. J. F. Dale Chapman must have been in post mid-late 1930s.

⁵² See Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 19 January 1937, consulted at Aberlour Headquarters in December 2018. As previously noted, the post had become vacant after the lady superintendent was asked to resign on account of 'disregarding of rules and regulations' and 'a general spirit of disloyalty and antagonism'.

staff; salary scale as laid down by the Orphanage Governing Body, with appropriate annual increments and emoluments of furnished rooms, board, lodgings and laundry; preference will be given to candidates under the age of 45 who are members of the Scottish Episcopal Church or C of E; the post is superannuable under the Local Government Superannuation (Scotland) Act, 1937; a Deputy Lady Superintendent will also be required, salary £180 plus annual increments—Application form and further details from Dean Wolfe, Warden...⁵³

A note in minutes of the Management Committee in the mid-1930s indicates that advertisements for staff were also placed in the *Church Times*, a weekly Anglican publication.⁵⁴ The advertising of key posts outside of Scotland, and in press organs associated with Anglicanism suggests that where possible, employees came from this religious background.

At the end of 1946, following the publication of the Clyde Report, a former child resident of Aberlour who returned later in life as a 'second Housemaster' met with a member of staff from the Home Department and gave his views on Aberlour. On the issue of staffing he alleged that there had been 800 changes of staff in the past ten years and the reasons were many, but chiefly that staff accommodation was 'usually a small room, shabbily furnished, old junk from auction sales, little privacy, restriction of movement and conversation in staff rooms.'⁵⁵ He continued by stating that staff were '[e]xpected to do miracles with no resources, harassed, no union or organisation to advance or protect their interests. Seldom meet together in a social capacity. Grievances seldom enquired into. Effect dealt with rather than cause.'⁵⁶ And that those who presented grievances were dismissed or asked to hand in their notice. We have no way of corroborating or denying the figure of 800 staff members, but the evidence reviewed indicates that there was a high staff turnover during this period.

An undoubted disincentive to employment at Aberlour was that wages were not competitive; this was never a wealthy institution. In 1941, when a housekeeping

⁵³ *Yorkshire Post*, 26 April 1948, p. 3.

⁵⁴ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 10 September 1935, consulted at Aberlour Headquarters in December 2018. This was for the post of Lady Superintendent, and since 50 applications were received, the Management Committee decided to make Anglicanism an additional requirement for the post.

⁵⁵ NRS ED11/443: record of correspondence and meeting with Robert Cardno by Mr Hewitson Brown dated 26 November 1946 [SGV.001.002.4715].

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, [SGV.001.002.4715].

assistant to the lady superintendent was needed, the annual salary offered was £60 per year with board and lodging. For this post, the incumbent also carried the responsibility of training orphanage girls. In the same column of vacancies, a post of table maid in a girls' school in Moffat is advertised, also commanding a salary of £60 per annum.⁵⁷

c.1950-1970

Difficulties with the recruitment of staff continued in this period, up until the run down and closure of the orphanage in the mid-1960s. Aberlour continued placing advertisements in the north of England press in respect of more senior posts, as well as housemistresses and housekeeping assistants throughout the early 1950s.

ABERLOUR ORPHANAGE BANFFSHIRE

LADY SUPERINTENDENT required for the above Children's Home of 350 children aged 5 to 16. The post is a responsible one requiring qualities of leadership and ability to guide and discipline senior girls. The L.S. is responsible with Deputy and two assistants for supervising catering, linen, and a large domestic staff. Previous boarding school or institutional experience desirable.

Particulars of salary, which will be adequate from the Warden, The Orphanage, Aberlour...to whom applications stating age, qualifications, experience, etc, should be sent not later than MARCH 25.⁵⁸

Where the 'lady superintendent' post is concerned, as much, if not more, emphasis was put on the domestic management skills of this person as opposed to any form of direct childcare experience. This is of note as the lady superintendent had responsibility for children's welfare at this time.

Other posts for nurses, trainee nursery assistants, domestic posts, as well as 'housemothers' were advertised in the Scottish press. We have no way of knowing if this method of recruitment was successful, but its continued use suggests that it must have reaped some return for advertising costs. As in the previous period, posts were likely also advertised in the *Church Times*.

The above advertisement also suggests that Aberlour continued to experience difficulties with the retention of staff, particularly senior staff. Evidence recovered

⁵⁷ *The Scotsman*, 12 September 1941, p. 8.

⁵⁸ *Yorkshire Post*, 20 March 1953, p. 3.

shows that the post of lady superintendent had been advertised at least five times between 1935 and 1948. In 1948, the orphanage appointed a new, experienced lady superintendent.⁵⁹ By 1953 we see the post being advertised again. Where other posts are concerned, there is no evidence that staffing was any more stable in this period than it had been previously.

In 1958, when the Rev. Wolfe retired, the new incumbent was Rev. C. W. Leslie who had experience of youth work in London. Under Leslie, during the 1950s to the mid-1960s, there probably was some relaxation of the preference for Episcopalians within the staffing at Aberlour; however, many members of the board of governors continued to be Episcopal clergy from the locality, as well as some senior clergy from elsewhere in Scotland. Membership of the board was complemented by ex-military men who had hereditary associations with the northeast and with the Episcopalian church, as well as being local councillors in Banffshire.⁶⁰ There was, therefore, a significant continued presence in the management at Aberlour of this organisation's traditional religious affiliation. BLK [REDACTED] the [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. This was BCK [REDACTED] [REDACTED] BCK [REDACTED] to resign from his post in [REDACTED] following allegations of mistreatment of children, and would be the [REDACTED]

The Rev Leslie died suddenly while still in post in 1969. He was succeeded by the long-serving sub-warden, Mrs Craven. Though this was an internal promotion it still marked a huge change in this organisation. Not only was its head a lay person, but also a woman. Mrs Craven had been employed within the orphanage since 1958, first in a house-keeping position.⁶² Management minutes indicate that in 1961 she was in the post of lady superintendent.⁶³ She was reported as having worked in several social service organisations in England before coming to Aberlour.⁶⁴ Mrs Craven was initially referred to in press reports as director of Aberlour, but management minutes

⁵⁹ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 26 May 1948, consulted at Aberlour Headquarters in December 2018.

⁶⁰ The long-time chairman of the board, Col. MacKintosh is described in his obituary as a 'Moray Laird'; see *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 8 February 1979, p. 29.

⁶¹ [REDACTED] BCK [REDACTED] was accused of excessive corporal punishment of a boy [ABE.001.001.1464-6].

⁶² No author, *A Short History of Aberlour Orphanage, 1950s-1960s*, Volume 3 (2003) p. 113 [WIT.003.001.5790].

⁶³ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 3 August 1961 [ABE.001.006.6604].

⁶⁴ *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 3 July 1969, p. 12.

reveal the title 'principal' was conferred at some point soon after her appointment. A deputy principal was also appointed.⁶⁵

As with earlier decades, within the orphanage, more senior posts required references; but these are not stated as a pre-requirement for other childcare posts. For example:

House Mother required for group of small boys in Aberlour Orphanage; no previous training required, but essential that applicants should have motherly outlook and sense of family discipline; adequate salary and ample time off duty. Apply Dean Wolfe. The Orphanage Aberlour.⁶⁶

In the 1960s, Aberlour began to expand its services away from the orphanage into small, 'family-group' homes. In the main, the new facilities contained houseparents, plus a resident assistant, as well as non-resident domestics. In respect of the recruitment of houseparents, the preference was now for married couples:

HOUSEPARENTS. Applications are invited from suitable married couples for joint appointments as Houseparents at a small unit for no more than twelve young people between ages 15-18. This is a new unit to be opened in a city. Superannuation scheme. Salary scale above national average. Special responsibility allowance. Details and applications to the Warden...⁶⁷

Previous experience is not a stated pre-requirement for this vacancy and there is no mention of references.

However, other examples from the time indicate that most advertisements required 'suitable candidates' with 'relevant experience'.⁶⁸ Occasionally adverts state qualifications as a requirement, but these are in the minority. This may have been because, as noted by the Warden (Mrs M. Craven), 'trained staff were difficult to get'.⁶⁹ The premise that childcare workers should be resident and also, in some instances, childless, made this type of employment unappealing as a long-term career. Aberlour confronted the same difficulties that local authorities and other voluntary providers had in this arena, and advertising for staff was therefore continual during the late 1960s.

⁶⁵Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 9 June 1970, consulted at Aberlour Headquarters in December 2018.

⁶⁶ *Aberdeen Evening Express*, 29 April 1953, p. 15.

⁶⁷ *Aberdeen Evening Express*, 25 January 1961, p. 12.

⁶⁸ See for example, *Aberdeen Evening Express*, 30 September 1968, p. 8.

⁶⁹ Quoted in *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 29 August 1969, p. 9.

Though advertisements do not specify religion, when diversification began and small homes were opened, the religious faith of applicants for houseparents continued to be relevant, given that these staff members were responsible for maintaining the religious affiliation of children. An inspection report from 1969 states that:

All children must be Protestant and both children and staff must attend the Scottish Episcopal Church at least once each Sunday as per Trust rules. All staff accept this as part of their conditions of service.⁷⁰

Following amendments to Aberlour's Trust agreement in the late 1960s, which appear to have been implemented sometime between 1969 and 1970, children were no longer required to attend the Episcopal Church and could follow their own religious persuasion.⁷¹ At this time, although the presence of Episcopalian clergy on the governing board diminished, it did not disappear.

While Aberlour did employ new staff during the transition to small group homes, internal moves of existing staff were also made. For example, in 1969 houseparents from the Trust's home in Keith were moved to the Trust's home in Dunfermline, replacing a temporary worker who was in post. This placement seems to have been made somewhat in haste as inspection reports from the time indicate that the houseparents at Dunfermline had no information about the children, no assistance, and little support from headquarters.⁷²

Recruiting suitable staff was difficult, but retention was also a problem. In October 1968 management minutes state:

Considerable difficulties had been experienced of late. One assistant had left to take up training with the Lancashire Authorities. Since that time two other trainees had been accepted for the course in Residential Child Care in Aberdeen.

⁷⁰ NRS ED11/755/2: *Voluntary Homes, Inspectors' Reports: Aberlour Children's Home Cumbernauld*, Inspection Report dated 12 July 1969 [SGV.001.006.7893].

⁷¹ NRS ED11/862: *Aberlour Orphanage Trust: Sycamore Cottage, Kirkcaldy and Bellyeoman Road, Dunfermline*, Form H3. (1969): Return for Sycamore Cottage Kirkcaldy, dated 7 January 1970 [SGV.001.004.9739]. In the Annual return submitted to the Scottish Office by the Aberlour Trust this amendment was cited. An earlier inspection report (June 1969) on the other hand, still states that 'All children must be Protestant and both children and staff must attend the Scottish Episcopal Church at least once each Sunday as per Trust rules. All staff accept this as part of their conditions of service' (NRS ED11/755/2: *Voluntary Homes, Inspectors' Reports: Aberlour Children's Home Cumbernauld*, Inspection Report dated 12 July 1969 [SGV.001.006.7893]). It therefore seems that implementation of this policy change across all Homes took place at different times between 1969 and 1970.

⁷² NRS ED11/862, Inspection Report re Sycamore Cottage Kirkcaldy and 6 Bellyeoman Road Dunfermline, dated 24 November 1967. [SGV.001.004.9725-7].

It was also very unfortunate and sad that Mrs. MacLean, the housemother at Bucksburn, was very ill and was not likely to return to duty. Mr. and Mrs. Mair, the Keith houseparents, would also be leaving as Mrs. Mair was now having another baby.

However, quite a number of candidates had been interviewed. Two trainees and a person capable of being an assistant had been engaged. A married couple had also been appointed for Cumbernauld and were to take up duty on 1st January, 1969. Further interviews were to take place on 15th and 16th October. The Warden was glad to be able to report that a large number of applicants had come forward in response to the latest advertisements.⁷³

It is likely that the attrition rate amongst very young assistants was high—many leaving to obtain qualifications.

Towards the end of this period, the Trust began to employ social workers in order to relieve the principal and deputy of direct supervisory and advisory responsibilities within the homes. This is noted in management minutes:

As reported at the previous meeting, Miss Ross, who appeared to be a very suitable applicant, had been interviewed in connection with this post. Excellent references had been submitted in her favour and Miss Ross had, therefore, been offered the post of Social Worker with the Trust. She had now accepted the appointment and was to commence duty on the 2nd November, 1970. [...]

Advertising was at present being undertaken for a second Social Worker for the homes in the North-East of Scotland.⁷⁴

As illustrated here, social workers employed by Aberlour did submit references.

In addition to the Social Worker posts, the post of Residential Homes Supervisor was advertised in 1970. For this post, 'an appropriate residential child care or social work qualification' was requested. Notably, this post was also advertised outside of Scotland.⁷⁵ There is evidence that this job may have come into being, at least initially, because of the need to provide more supervision and support for homes at a distance to headquarters.⁷⁶

⁷³ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 14 October 1968 [ABE.001.006.6680].

⁷⁴ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 6 October 1970 [ABE.001.006.6444].

⁷⁵ *Newcastle Journal*, 1 June 1970, p. 10.

⁷⁶ See for example, Aberlour Minute Book, entries dated 18 February 1970 [ABE.001.006.7337] and 30 May 1972 [ABE.001.006.7339].

c.1970-1990

Staffing problems continued during this period and advertising for staff was frequent. The following provides a typical example of such recruitment by the mid-1970s:

APPOINTMENT OF RESIDENT HOUSEMOTHERS

(Assistants to Officers-in-Charge)

Applications are invited for appointment as resident Housemother (Assistants to Officers-in-Charge) at the Trust's small homes for children in North-east Scotland. Applicants should have residential experience in the care of children. The present appointments are homes in Aberdeen and Keith.

Salary-scale £1839-£2154 per annum, with commencing point according to experience and qualifications. No deductions in respect of board and accommodation. Local Government Superannuation Scheme.

Application forms and further details from the Director Aberlour Trust 36 Park Terrace, Stirling.⁷⁷

Of note is that candidates with relevant experience were requested, and possession of qualifications is mentioned.

A management minute from 1973, records the following:

Staffing. The Principal said that the staffing situation has [never been?] so acute. Not only was staff lacking in quantity, but it was lacking in quality. Advertising for staff continued, but [nearly every?] person applying for a post was almost totally unsuitable. [Much had?] been written and discussions had taken place on the subject. [New?] training schemes were envisaged, but no-one had yet answered the question as to where the potential recruits were to come from.

[...]

The Chairman said the facts were that although residential child care was a profession, it was almost more or less a vocation and the demands made on staff had to be seen to be believed. It was also true to say that a child coming into care to-day was a very much more difficult character than was the case some years back. To enter into child care work one had to have a vocation for it because it was intensely demanding, very trying to the nerves, and one had to

⁷⁷ *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 20 June 1975, p. 17.

be physically fairly tough with certain types. It was also true that in present circumstances the need of a man's presence in each home was very necessary, whether or not he followed his own occupation during the daytime.

The Principal said new training schemes were envisaged and there was talk of raising the status of the residential worker. That was all to the good, but before long some of the courses would be turning out what amounted to supervisors who would not be willing to do the routine work in a children's home. Several bodies were investigating training schemes at the moment. Mrs. Hay [governor] said, and the Principal agreed, that a great many people on the training courses were already in employment, having been seconded by their employers to the course, and were duty bound to return to the previous posts.

The Principal said that she found that the larger homes for fifteen, where four or five staff were employed, were running more easily as when one member of staff left, it was possible to keep the home running satisfactorily with the remaining staff until such time as a new appointment was made. However, in the Homes for ten children where a Housemother and an Assistant were appointed, it was virtually impossible to keep...⁷⁸

It is unclear whether other methods of recruitment were used, but evidence suggests that there were internal appointments, and staff were moved around to fill vacancies.⁷⁹

In common with other voluntary organisations, Aberlour seems to have experienced difficulties in attracting qualified staff. One factor hindering recruitment of qualified staff was that residential staff had lower status and lower salaries than field workers. The restrictiveness of being resident full-time in a children's home was likely another serious disincentive to younger, more energetic individuals who might wish to have families of their own.

Following an incident in 1970 where houseparents were dismissed from the Dowans home, members of the governing body asked for assurances about measures taken to ensure unsuitable staff were not employed. The principal, Mrs Craven, responded that:

⁷⁸ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 29 March 1973; the image provided of this record is of poor quality and some text is not legible, this is indicated with question marks [ABE.001.001.6644].

⁷⁹ For an example see Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 13 March 1936, p. 345: 'The Governing Body appointed Miss Wallace in her place'. Miss Wallace was an internal appointment to the post of Lady Superintendent [ABE.001.006.6466].

...all applications for posts of Houseparents were thoroughly investigated and references obtained. The Trust, like all other Social Services, could only appoint staff from the applicants applying for posts. The standards of applicants had improved considerably in recent years and, were still improving. It was impossible to give an absolute guarantee that incidents would not occur. Everything possible in the way of supervision visits to homes was done and staff were constantly reminded of regulations and their own responsibilities, but staff had to be trusted. The appointment of a Social Worker would give an added safeguard, but even so it was still possible for isolated incidents to occur. All residential establishments were faced with similar possibilities, and even where high ranking officials lived within these establishments, it was still possible for incidents to occur without their knowledge.⁸⁰

Staffing problems did not lessen during the 1970s. In this context, it is somewhat surprising that in 1979 there was a return to requests for candidates who were 'in sympathy with the Christian principles on which the organisation was founded.'⁸¹ There was new management in place by this point.

The principal, Mrs Craven, resigned in 1975. The post was advertised but also seems to have been open to internal candidates.⁸² A recruitment notice for this appointment requested 'suitably qualified and experience persons able to develop the work of the Trust' and a 'wide experience of Social Work (field and residential)'.⁸³ Mrs Craven's replacement as director was Mr Jack Church. Unfortunately, we did not review the management minutes which discuss the selection of potential appointees for this post. In 1979, however, in a letter addressed to the Board of Governors and the primus of the Episcopal Church, Dr C. K. McKay, Senior Lecturer in Child Development at Aberdeen University, alleged that 'Mr. Church has no formal qualifications for this work'.⁸⁴ He further stated that during conversations with houseparents and social workers he had been:

⁸⁰ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 1 September 1970 [ABE.001.001.0861-2].

⁸¹ *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 8 March 1979, p. 27.

⁸² Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 26 March 1975 [ABE.001.001.6661]. This entry is only partially legible. It is clear within it that the post was advertised but seems also to have been open to internal candidates. On the evidence recovered, it is unclear if Mr Church was already employed by the Trust in some capacity.

⁸³ *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 31 March 1975, p. 12.

⁸⁴ NRS ED11/850: Letter from Dr C. K. McKay of Aberdeen University department of psychology to the Primus of the [Episcopal] Church in Scotland, dated 13 February 1979 [SGV.001.006.8520-1]. In earlier decades the Primus was a member of the Aberlour Board of Governors, but it is unclear if this was still the case by 1979; it is likely it was not, and the writer approached the Primus as he had been unable to get the ear of the governors.

...appalled by the hostility expressed towards Mr. Church. He is accused of being vindictive, dishonest, devious, and as showing little interest in the children's welfare. The qualified social workers involved claimed as their real reasons for leaving the Trust their inability to get along with Mr. Church and the lack of opportunity to bring to the Board of Governors matters appropriate to their professional duties.⁸⁵

Local government reorganisation and consequent alterations to social work policy at the time affected the relationship between local authorities and voluntary agencies. The former tended to favour the involvement of voluntary agencies as being more appropriate in the provision of specialist services than standard residential care for children. Aberlour did move down the avenue of specialist provision in the 1980s. We have little information about the staffing of these homes. Documents originally prepared for the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), probably in respect of discussion of rates paid to Aberlour for children sent to them by local authorities, include details of registration dates, staffing, and facilities in the Homes.⁸⁶ The forms supplied by individual local authorities to COSLA provide a contemporary snapshot of staffing in Aberlour's Homes.

In Aberlour House in Paisley, the staff establishment (responsible for the care of 15 children) was as follows: a Matron, Depute (both residential), a part-time Caring Assistant (non-residential), and two part-time domestics. No qualifications are detailed for any of these staff, but the designation of a matron suggests this person may have been from a nursing background.⁸⁷

In Calton Crescent (one of two homes operating in Stirling), married, resident houseparents were in charge to care for 15 children. They were assisted by three housemothers and a domestic 'as required'. No qualifications are stated for any staff.⁸⁸

At Bridge of Don, the home had been closed for refurbishment and it did not yet have a full complement of children (usually 10); in post was an officer-in-charge, two

⁸⁵ Ibid, [SGV.001.006.8520-1].

⁸⁶ NRS ED11/851: *Aberlour Child Care Trust, 1979-1980*, 'Convention of Scottish Local Authorities Voluntary Homes – Maintenance Rates' [SGV.001.006.8980-90]. Following enactment of the Social Work (Scotland) Act, 1968, local authorities were responsible for registering children's homes.

⁸⁷ Ibid., [SGV.001.006.8988].

⁸⁸ Ibid., [SGV.001.006.8980].

houseparents, and a part-time domestic. No names or qualifications are stated for staff.⁸⁹

Other registration documents included in this government file provide the following details about the Trust's home in Hamilton:⁹⁰

Name	Position	Qualification/experience/training	
Agnes Bisland	Officer-in-Charge	RGN, NNEB	16 yrs experience
Eleanor Haston	Depute Officer-in Charge	PRC	3 yrs experience
Rosemary McCall	Assistant Housemother	NNEB	
Mrs. Cook	Care Assistant (Non-resident)	NNEB	
Mrs. Crombie	Domestic (part-time)		
Mr Bisland	Father Figure	Free board for services	

Further remarks on this form state:

This is almost a professional fostering situation, and with its relatively stable population, provides a high quality of care in a very slightly artificial setting. The present children are from outwith Strathclyde Region and it seems doubtful whether they would have been placed here had they been presented for reception into care now. Discussions are being started with the parent organisation as to the future of the Home.⁹¹

There were eight children in residence at this house.

⁸⁹ Ibid., [SGV.001.006.8987].

⁹⁰ Ibid., [SGV.001.006.8989].

⁹¹ Ibid., [SGV.001.006.8989].

In another home in Cumbernauld, recently re-registered to accommodate eight children, the staff establishment consisted of an officer-in-charge, two housemothers, and a part-time domestic, but one housemother post was vacant. No qualifications are mentioned for any of the staff in post.⁹²

Further remarks on these homes suggest that problems with staff retention continued during this period. At Calton Crescent it was noted that: '[t]here has been a large turn-over in staff since the opening of this Home in 1975, some of the original staff remaining; the present officer-in-charge has been in post two years.'⁹³ The document for Aberlour House submitted by the Renfrew division of Strathclyde region states that: '[b]oth the Matron and her Depute resigned some months ago and they were temporarily replaced by a Peripatetic Matron and Depute.'⁹⁴

The fact that few of these summary documents for Aberlour homes include staff names or qualifications possibly reflects awareness of a high staff turnover. Where we do have such details, as in the case of the Hamilton home, there appears to have been a relatively stable staff. But the qualifications held by workers do not include the certificate in child care. The person in charge was a registered nurse and the deputy had only a preliminary childcare qualification. Other staff were qualified nursery nurses, though the children in this home might be up to 18-years of age. This is not to say that this staff team had not achieved stability and good standards in this care setting, but remarks by the local authority officer indicate that this was an unusual setup and not one likely to be repeated by the local authority. Aberlour had moved children here from different parts of Scotland, not within Strathclyde region, and by the late 1970s the region did not encourage this.

⁹² Ibid., [SGV.001.006.8990].

⁹³ Ibid., [SGV.001.006.8980].

⁹⁴ Ibid., [SGV.001.006.8988].

Staff training

c.1930-1950

Minutes of meetings of the management committee mention probationary periods; for example, a new lady superintendent was appointed for three months in the first instance in 1935.⁹⁵ Evidence only indicates that this kind of probation applied to senior roles. There is no evidence to indicate that a probationary period was applied to other childcare workers.

From the evidence reviewed for this study it seems unlikely that any form of training, either informal or formal, was offered to staff during this period. The only possible exception to this is the case of trainee nursery assistants. These would likely have been under the guidance of a qualified nurse—providing hands-on instruction to learners in the workplace was an acknowledged part of the role of the qualified nurse in this timeframe. The training of nursery assistants, therefore, was informal and we have no information to suggest that additional, classroom-based instruction was included for this or any other roles.

c.1950-1970

We have no information about any standard form of induction for the earlier part of this timeframe. There does seem to have been a probationary period imposed for childcare staff.⁹⁶ This might vary from three to six months.

In the latter half of the 1960s, when small group homes were rapidly established, the evidence reviewed indicates that there was no form of induction nor any real preparatory time allowed where extra assistance was provided for staff. At two new homes opened in Fife, a temporary worker, ahead of the arrival of houseparents, settled in children initially. The temporary worker (Miss Fordyce) was qualified (holding the residential childcare certificate) but was given no information about the eight children transferred to the homes and no assistance. It was noted that children at the home in Kirkcaldy were 'very unsettled and strange in their new surroundings. All had been resident in Aberlour for many years. Miss Fordyce appeared strained and overworked.'⁹⁷ It must be assumed that this staff member had a peripatetic role

⁹⁵ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 21 Oct 1935, consulted at Aberlour Headquarters in December 2018.

⁹⁶ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 29 May 1959 [ABE.001.006.6595].

⁹⁷ NRS ED11/862: Aberlour Orphanage Trust: Sycamore Cottage, Kirkcaldy and Bellyeoman Road, Dunfermline; Paper No. 30, Sycamore cottage, Kirkcaldy [SGV.001.004.9731].

as Miss Fordyce was also responsible for 'settling in' the children placed in the new home in Dunfermline before this was taken over by houseparents.

When a social worker was employed in 1970, a period of induction for her was organised:

Initially Miss Ross would be spending about a month at Headquarters to secure background information and a knowledge of the running of the Trust. Later she would be working with children in the Trust's homes in the Central Belt...⁹⁸

The evidence reviewed suggests that there was no standard and/or compulsory form of induction for childcare workers, though informal arrangements for new and inexperienced staff may have been practiced.

Any possible avenues for training were external. Minutes of a management committee meeting in 1952 indicate that a housemaster (Mr McEwan) was to attend one of the Home Department refresher courses, presumably on residential child care.⁹⁹ These courses were aimed at staff who already had substantial experience, with the Warden (Rev. Leslie) himself attending one or more such courses in the initial years after he came into post.¹⁰⁰ These are the only instances of attendance at training that has been recovered from the records made available to us.

In the absence of staff records, aside from teachers placed in the school and the few staff who may have taken up the option of Scottish Office refresher courses after being employed by Aberlour, we have no evidence that any candidate with official, certificated childcare qualifications worked within the orphanage. However, in the late 1950s, Aberlour began accepting students from the residential childcare course run in Aberdeen when they required practical placements as part of their training.¹⁰¹ These students were, of course, temporary workers for the duration of their studies.

Some potential career progression for those who entered employment with Aberlour is also evident, as the following advertisements infer:

⁹⁸ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 6 October 1970 [ABE.001.006.6444].

⁹⁹ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 25 September 1952, consulted at Aberlour Headquarters in December 2018.

¹⁰⁰ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 17 November 1960 [ABE.001.006.6597].

¹⁰¹ Aberlour Minute Book, entries dated 29 May 1959 [ABE.001.006.6595] & 17 November 1960 [ABE.001.006.6597].

HOUSEFATHER. Applications are invited for appointment as resident Housefather and Assistant Housefather. Assistant grade open to those without previous direct experience. Superannuation scheme. Salary scale above national average. Details from and applications to the Warden...

HOUSEMOTHER. Applications are invited for appointment as resident Housemother and Assistant Housemother. Assistant grade open to those without previous direct experience...¹⁰²

c.1970-1990

Terms and conditions of employment issued by Aberlour in the late 1970s stipulate that:

The first six months of employment will be regarded as a probationary period.

Appointments are to the Aberlour Child Care Trust and not to a particular home and the employee may be required to transfer to another home at any time on reasonable notice being given.¹⁰³

There is no mention in this document of any form of induction, but as can be seen, staff might be moved around to fill urgent vacancies.

Training was in use during this period, though this may have amounted to informal, in-service training supplemented by short external courses. In 1970, plans were made for the secondment of two housefathers: one to a social work course to commence in 1971 and one to the residential childcare course in Aberdeen.¹⁰⁴ Another example of a houseparent being seconded to training available locally can be found at Dunfermline in 1970. Here the houseparent had been in post for over two years and had a background in school nursing. Though the exact nature of this is unknown the course sounds to be along the lines of a 'refresher' course for those with some experience of residential care. The assistant houseparent in the same home had some preliminary training but hoped to proceed to the full-time course at Langside in Glasgow. However, inspectors commented that she did 'not appear to have a strong relationship with the children' in her care.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² *Aberdeen Evening Express*, 25 January 1961, p. 12.

¹⁰³ NRS ED11/851: Voluntary Homes Administration; copy of 'Statement' re Terms and Conditions of Employment by Aberlour Trust dated October 1979 [SGV.001.006.8879-80].

¹⁰⁴ See Aberlour Minute Book, 6 October 1970 [ABE.001.006.6444].

¹⁰⁵ NRS ED11 /861/2: *Voluntary Homes, Inspectors' Reports: Bellyeoman Road Dunfermline*, Inspection Report 1970, p. 1. [SGV.001.004.8841]

In 1977, due to continuing staffing problems the following was commented upon by the director:

Our staffing situation is satisfactory, at the present time, so far as numbers are concerned. Recent appointments have filled all but one of the vacancies, this being at Paisley. Once again, the quality of applicants coming forward is not what one would hope for, nor is the quantity. Only one application was received for the post of Deputy Officer in Charge at Bucksburn and this from a young married woman who had no experience relevant to the post. A former member of staff expressed interest in this post and it was offered to her.

It was disappointing to see that two qualified applicants for posts were so unsuitable, because of their temperaments and personalities. This makes me ever more convinced that we should continue our policy of training our own younger members of staff to become our Officers in Charge in the future.¹⁰⁶

It is probable that junior staff who stayed in post for any length of time and showed willingness were sent on the types of training schemes enumerated and obtained promotion by this route. This investment was probably only made when there was a likelihood that staff would remain working for Aberlour. This was a problem all voluntary organisations faced.¹⁰⁷

By 1979, a report on the Trust's activities by CAS stated that:

Most of the officers in charge have a one-year qualification in the residential care of children and young people. The Trust takes advantage of training facilities in Scotland and sends staff on CCETSW-approved in-service study schemes awarding the Certificate of Attendance. It also sends staff on short courses appropriate to the work of the Trust and run by a variety of training bodies. The number of qualified staff compares favourably with similar homes in local authority social work departments.¹⁰⁸

There is no elaboration in this document of precisely how many staff were qualified, or further specifics about the qualifications mentioned. The one-year qualification, for example, could be the long-established Certificate in Residential Child Care which could be undertaken in two colleges in Scotland; other preliminary certificates in

¹⁰⁶ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 22 November 1977 [ABE.001.001.6696].

¹⁰⁷ Until the mid-1980s central government provided grants to voluntary organisations to support training costs but these never met the whole cost of sending staff for training or the cost of replacement staff.

¹⁰⁸ NRS ED11/851: Voluntary Homes Administration; Social Work Evaluation of the Aberlour Child Care Trust—draft copy dated March 1980, p. 3 [SGV.001.006.8807].

childcare were also awarded by further education colleges by this point. The latter were largely practice-based and tended to attract school leavers rather than more mature applicants.¹⁰⁹

By the 1980s and within the context of more specialised services being provided, there is evidence that training—including in-service and external training—was available. In 1986, for example, it was noted that an officer-in-charge at the Bucksburn facility had failed to attend in-service training. This member of staff was dismissed subsequently, though other more serious charges were also made against him than failure to meet training requirements. It was proposed that another member of staff due to return from training as a qualified social worker should take over the post.¹¹⁰

In 1985, following allegations of aggressive behaviour by residential staff towards a child made by his parent, staff were to be given specific in-service training as follows:

We are, therefore, initiating a training session devoted to the control of difficult behaviour and led by our consultant Dr. James Rodgers.

We can find no evidence to suggest that either of the male members of staff concerned engaged in un-necessary or uncontrolled physical measures to establish the necessary control of the situation.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Residential child care training of this nature took place in Further Education Colleges in Scotland. Expansion of provision happened in the late 1960s, and a so called 'preliminary' course which took two years was introduced at Aberdeen's Pre-nursing College and led to a qualification awarded by the English training authority. Other 'Junior' courses aimed more at younger applicants were begun in 1967 at colleges in Edinburgh (Dean College) and Glasgow (Barmulloch College), it is thought that these took one year. In addition, a programme of in-service training which ran over one year was begun in 1968 in Dundee; this was aimed at staff of local authorities and voluntary organisations. See Social Work Services Group, *Child Care in Scotland, 1968: a Report for the Secretary of State for Scotland*, Cmnd. 4069 (Edinburgh 1969), p. 16 and Table 9, p. 26.

¹¹⁰ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 4 January 1986; the seconded staff member was undertaking the CQSW course [ABE.001.006.7309].

¹¹¹ Aberlour Minute Book, entry: letter from director (Gerald E. Barlow) to Mr Burt, Area Officer, Central Region Social Work Department dated 17 December 1985 [ABE.001.001.0763].

Question 2: Discipline and Punishment

c. 1930-1950

Guidance

At the start of this period there was nothing in law to prevent childcare institutions from administering punishment, including corporal punishment, in order to discipline children. Both the Children Act, 1908 and the Children and Young Persons Act (Scotland) 1937 recognised the right of those in *loco parentis* to administer reasonable punishment to the child.¹¹² The Children and Young Persons Act endorsed the administration of punishment, stating continuance of 'the right of any parent, teacher, or other person having the lawful control or charge of a child or young person to administer punishment to him.'¹¹³ But the specific application of this right was left up to the institution itself.

Corporal punishment was sanctioned within rules for maintaining discipline. A letter in 1950 by Dean Wolfe to the secretary of the RSSPCC sheds some light into attitudes towards discipline and corporal punishment at the time:

I must confess that in my work as Superintendent I am confronted at times with problems and difficulties brought on by heinous indiscretions of subordinates. I have one such housemistress now who is supposed to have the background training gained in Edinburgh in Club work. In less than a month, an orderly group of boys of which she had charge had degenerated into a gang of hooligans. She came with high-sounding theories that she did not believe in corporal punishment; in less than a fortnight she was tearing about the place with strap constantly in hand like a sheep drover, totally incompetent. This person, I find, informed members of her Committee and a Home Office inspector that she simply had to fall in, much against her will, with a vicious system which was already in operation.¹¹⁴

As illustrated by this extract, the physical punishment of children was simply treated as acceptable—both as a form of reprimand and as a deterrent, provided it did not cause lasting injury. Aberlour's own set of staff guidelines also provides evidence of

¹¹² See Norrie, K. McK. (2017) *Legislative Background to the Treatment of Children and Young People Living Apart from their Parents*, Edinburgh: Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry.

¹¹³ *Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act, 1937*. Part II, Section 12(7), p. 11.

¹¹⁴ Aberlour case sample; 1950s file 2: letter from Dean Wolfe to Mr C. Cumming Forsyth [Secretary of RSSPCC] dated 15 July 1950 [ABE.001.009.1413].

general attitudes towards discipline.¹¹⁵ The rules on punishment are stated on page one of this document, perhaps indicating their level of importance:

PUNISHMENTS.

Rules Governing Punishments throughout the Whole of the Orphanage.

With a large family of children, there will always be minor offences and irregularities in conduct and discipline, as well as from time to time major offences, such as stealing, lying, defiance, persistent laziness, etc. It will be left to the discretion of the Housemistresses and Housemasters to decide the degree of the offence. The following, however, is a rough guide to the system of discipline operating in the Orphanage:-

A Black-mark Register will be kept. Minor offences will be punished by giving one black mark. This covers offences such as: -Neglect of work; untidiness; dirtiness of hands; faces and boots; acts of disobedience; untruths and so forth. Major offences comprise stealing; defiance; out of bounds; foul or filthy language; serious damage to furniture or fabric of the Orphanage.

Housemasters may administer Corporal Punishment at their discretion to Boys guilty of Offences which merit Corporal Punishment, but only to the extent of THREE STROKES on the hand or on the Trousers Seat. Housemistresses may occasionally smack a naughty child on the hand or on the trouser seat, BUT UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES MUST HOUSEMASTERS OR HOUSEMISTRESSES STRIKE THE CHILDREN ABOUT THE HEAD, FACE OR EARS.

Every case of corporal punishment must be marked in the Black Mark Book with the Letter "P." More serious offences deserving of corporal punishment must be sent to the Warden or Lady Superintendent.

At the close of each week the black marks will be read out by the Warden or Lady Superintendent, and any boy with more than four black marks will be degraded for a fortnight. If during that fortnight he preserves a clean sheet he will be reinstated to his former grade. The senior boys and girls are graded and pocket-money is given at the rate of 3d, 4d and 6d per week. Other punishments may be given such as: impositions, depriving them of little privileges, standing outside the Housemaster's room, going early to bed, but

¹¹⁵ NRS ED11/443: *Aberlour Orphanage, Aberlour, Banffshire Annual Returns 1934-;* 'Aberlour Orphanage Rules and Regulations: And Some Notes and Suggestions for Staff' [SGV.001.002.4663]. It is unclear when this document was first published, but it was certainly in use during the 1940s and is mentioned in a minute written by the inspector Miss Doull dated 31 August 1948 [SGV.001.002.4661].

under no circumstances ARE THE CHILDREN TO BE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FOOD EXCEPT WITH THE WARDEN'S SANCTION.

If the Day-room as a whole gets generally slack loss of pocket-money for the whole Day-room will be imposed by the Warden, Sub-Warden or Lady Superintendent. Each of the senior Day-rooms may be divided into four sections with a Section Leader, and at the end of the month the section with the least number of black marks may be given additional "weekers" or sweeties.

SPECIAL NOTE.

Punishment should always be remedial, never administered in a temper, and always of such nature that the child will recognise its justice.¹¹⁶

It can thus be seen that housemasters and mistresses had quite a large amount of autonomy for deciding what kind of behaviour merited punishment and what type of punishment should be given for particular misdemeanours. Punishment could be meted out to individuals or collectives of children. The black mark system had been in place since at least the 1930s (it is mentioned in an inspection report dated 1934) and whilst we have not recovered previously issued versions there is evidence that Rules and Regulations regarding corporal punishment existed as early as 1932.¹¹⁷ The set of rules reproduced above was probably issued around 1947-8 and replaced earlier rules.¹¹⁸

The 'black mark' system of punishment described above was quite an elaborate one. In 1944 a Scottish Office inspector concluded, after some consideration and consultation with previous inspection reports, that:

The Housemasters are allowed to use a strap, limited to "two on the hand". There is no record kept. They have a "black mark" system - 3 marks, a half of the pocket money is stopped; 4 marks means that the whole pocket money is stopped, and the offender sent to the Warden. Pocket money may be regained after 2 weeks' exemplary conduct.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2 [SGV.001.002.4663-4]. Emphasis in the original.

¹¹⁷ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 10 March 1932, [ABE.001.001.1408-9]

¹¹⁸ The estimate of the date is based on the fact that statutory regulations for boarding out were issued in 1947; these covered children boarded out by local authorities to voluntary homes.

¹¹⁹ NRS ED11/443: Inspection Report headed 'Scottish Central After Care Council: Voluntary Homes (Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1932)', dated 7 August 1944; the writer of the report is Hewitson Brown. Hewitson Brown does not mention the report but his words in 1944 are more or less verbatim from the entry in the 1934 report [SGV.001.002.4768].

Of note is the mention above that use of the strap was limited to 'two on the hand', whilst in the 'Rules and Regulations' quoted from above it is stated that housemasters, can administer 'THREE STROKES on the hand or on the Trouser Seat' to children. This suggests that while in 1944 two strokes of the strap on the hand was permissible, by 1948, this had increased to three strokes on the hand or on the trouser seat.

As can be seen within these rules on punishment, there is no elaboration on corporal punishment for older girls. While corporal punishment was officially sanctioned for boys and criticism of this was not likely from many quarters in Scotland, older girls were a different matter. Following inspection in October 1947, an inspector forwarded a copy of punishment guidelines as they applied to Remand Homes in the period where corporal punishment of older girls was prohibited.¹²⁰ Correspondence resulted from the receipt of these guidelines. Dean Wolfe sent for further elaboration on this matter to the Home Department inspectorate as follows:

If it is not troubling you too much, it would be helpful for us to learn the sort of method adopted for the punishment of rebellious and obstreperous girls. Rule 16, while admirable as an ideal, is entirely negative and does not shed light on the method to be adopted when from time to time there arises an outburst of hooligan or vilifying defiant behaviour amongst the senior girls. Such behaviour occurs, as I gather from recent newspaper reports, in Remand Homes and also in Aberlour Orphanage. At present it is left to the discretion of our Lady Superintendent to administer corporal punishment should the offence be so heinous as to deserve it. Such punishments are recorded in the Punishment Book. Her point of view is that if corporal punishment is allowed in the School and not in the House for really serious offences, it would create an invidious and difficult situation. Before I bring the matter to the notice of our Governing Body your helpful advice will be appreciated.¹²¹

The reply to Dean Wolfe's letter from the inspectorate went like this:

Thank you for your letter. I agree that the maintenance of discipline among older girls is a very difficult problem, but the decision of people of experience is that corporal punishment generally does more harm than good. If it leaves a girl with a feeling of resentment, instead of making her feel ashamed of herself, or sorry, it is worse than useless as a means of training.¹²²

¹²⁰ Ibid., Inspection Report [SGV.001.002.4648].

¹²¹ Ibid., Letter from Dean Wolfe to Miss Harrison, dated 5 November 1947 [SGV.001.002.4670].

¹²² Ibid., Letter to Dean Wolfe dated 7 November 1947, unsigned, presumably written by Miss Harrison. [SGV.001.002.4669].

Often overlooked were the other types of punishment, as well as daily humiliations and deprivations children experienced. For example, in 1946, a letter was forwarded to the Home Department from a senior staff member at the RSSPCC. The letter was written by a former housemother at Aberlour. In this she states that two girls who ran away were given the following punishment on return:

...they locked each one alone in a lavatory with only a blanket they could either lie on the floor or sit, they gave them a little food, when I questioned their right to treat them like this I was told they had preferred to lie out in the woods and this punishment was inside.¹²³

Both the regularity with which the orphanage was visited and the content of inspection reports in the late 1940s suggest that inspectors were not entirely satisfied with care at Aberlour Orphanage; among the many issues that alarmed them was that of punishment. Following an inspection in 1948, an inspector recorded that:

We landed in the Institute in the course of the detection of an incident. All the boys were suspected of removing a jam roll from the oven on the previous night and substituting in the dish a quantity of pig swill which had been put back in the oven. During our visit to the Institute, it was discovered that this had been perpetrated by two of the girls and we rather wondered what punishment was going to be inflicted. We suspected that they might receive corporal punishment.¹²⁴

Reflecting on a visit to Aberlour Orphanage in 1948, an inspector wrote that:

Mr Cunningham gave me the impression (which I share very fully) that the Warden, in consequence of being in continuous contact for over 20 years with 350 orphans of both sexes, all of them difficult, many of them abnormal, was having his character profoundly modified by the experience and found it necessary—quite understandably—to protect his sensibilities with a formidable armour of insensitiveness and to function as a Warden in some detachment from the normal human emotions. This impression gained strength from the fact that he always referred to himself when addressing the children as "the Warden". Mr Cunningham admits that he felt a little prejudiced by this outlook but in our discussion had quite clearly formed the same impressions as the other Inspectors have formed from time to time. Mr Cunningham was not impressed

¹²³ *Ibid.*, Letter from Miss Somerville to C.A. Cumming-Forsyth, General Secretary of the RSSPCC; Cumming-Forsyth's letter to Mr Hewitson Brown at the Home Department in which he includes a copy of Miss Somerville's letter is dated 22 April 1946 [SGV.001.002.4818-21].

¹²⁴ NRS ED11/443; Minute by Hewitson Brown dated 10 December 1948 [SVG.001.002.4644].

by the fact that he held individual children up to ridicule in front of the other children and pilloried the boy [S] in front of the whole of the dining room.¹²⁵

The Clyde Report was critical of the effects that this preoccupation with the maintenance of order and control had on the lives of children.¹²⁶

Rules around in the late 1940s, placed some prohibitions on depriving children of food as a punishment, but it was not forbidden. A certain amount of material deprivation of this type may have been systemic in this institution in any case, and theft of food a consequence.¹²⁷

Recording

As we can see, 'black mark books' were reputedly kept by housemasters and housemistresses; if an example of these has survived we have not been provided with such. In so far as punishments were recorded these would have been limited to within the maximum the rules of the time allowed. The reliability of any such system of recording punishment depended on the rigour and truthfulness of houseparents. In 1948, an inspector was curious about the extent of punishment and it was commented that:

... it would be interesting to know more about the actual nature and operation of the elaborate system of awards and punishments of which he had occasional glimpses - how the sweeties and the pocket money were given or withheld and the nature and extent of physical correction.¹²⁸

The Sub-Warden also kept his own black book. In 1947 it was stated in a report that '[b]oys are sent to the Warden for five offences—theft, bad language, impertinence, absconding, and insubordination.'¹²⁹ At the time the inspectorate recommended a special punishment book to replace the 'black mark books'.¹³⁰

¹²⁵ NRS ED11/443: minute dated 24 December 1948, this is initialled 'IHB' [Mr Hewitson Brown] and the writer was accompanied on the inspection by Mr C. C. Cunningham [SGV.001.002.4636].

¹²⁶ Scottish Home Department, *Report of the Committee on Homeless Children* (Edinburgh, 1946), Cmd. 6911, pp. 14–15 [LEG.001.001.8695–6].

¹²⁷ See for example commentary in the Report of the Committee on Homeless Children [Clyde report], p. 26 [LEG.001.001.8705].

¹²⁸ NRS ED11/443: minute dated 24 December 1948 [SGV.001.002.4637].

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, Inspection Report dated 16 October 1947 [SGV.001.002.4676].

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, Inspection Report dated 16 October 1947 [SGV.001.002.4676].

Case files may not be forthcoming about the nature of punishment, though in the following example we may reasonably conclude from other documentation on the subject of absconding that this involved corporal punishment by the Warden:

I regret to report also that the other boy from your Authority, [...], has given us a lively time since his arrival. On one or two occasions he has been caught out in small acts of petty pilfering, but a few weeks ago the climax was reached when he rifled the Church collecting box in company with another boy. Thereafter they set off on trek, eventually reaching Inverness, and after a couple of days they were caught by the police with a pile of odds and ends they had looted from Woolworths and Boots Stores. We took the boys back to the Orphanage and they were duly punished, but the Fiscal is to decide whether or not he will take action against them in the Juvenile Court.¹³¹

Extracts of minutes of meetings provide several examples from this period where excessive corporal punishment was used. For example, at a meeting of the school committee in 1932, minutes record the sanctioning of a teacher for bruising a boy in a way that was 'contrary to the regulations'.¹³² Attention was drawn by the governors to regulations for punishment that pertained to the orphanage and the teacher stated that he was not aware of these. He claimed the boy's defiance required 'immediate and drastic punishment' and pled 'extenuating circumstance'. The teacher was admonished with a warning not to repeat this behaviour. The minute does detail that where corporal punishment was concerned 'it had always been the practice to administer such punishment when necessary'.¹³³ This particular punishment was given in the school, that is in a semi-public place, and so became common knowledge that evidently got back to the headteacher. It is a feature of reporting in such cases, in Aberlour and elsewhere, that generally they might be escalated (as with the case above) because of their public or semi-public exposure and/or reporting made by an outsider.

The available records reveal that children might encounter violence from beyond care staff and teachers. In ██████ an incident was reported where a school handyman

¹³¹ Aberlour case file; letter from the Warden to the director of social welfare, Kilmarnock dated 5 December 1947 [ABE.001.001.0959]. For an example of absconding being punished with corporal punishment see: Sample of Aberlour case files, 1950s case 2, Letter to Mr Cumming Forsyth (RSSPCC) from Rev. Wolfe dated 30 June 1950 [ABE.001.009.1409].

¹³² Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 10 March 1932 [ABE.001.001.1408-09].

¹³³ *Ibid.*, [ABE.001.001.1408-09].

had struck a 'senior girl' on the face.¹³⁴ There is no note of how this matter was resolved in available records, but the worker was still in post several years later.

c.1950-1970

Guidance

Punishment of children was a matter that was under discussion in the Scottish Office following the issue of Home Office regulations about the conduct of children's homes in England and Wales published in 1951.¹³⁵ It is probable that there was an intention to provide a similar statutory instrument in Scotland—though such regulations did not in fact emerge until 1959. It is unclear whether the government had any interactions with Aberlour on this subject during this time. It is also unclear whether the 'Rules and Regulations' operating in the 1940s were still in operation in the early 1950s.

While encouragement to keep a record of punishments was given by Scottish Office inspectors, it was not until 1959 that this guidance on the conduct of homes was issued in statutory regulations:

Discipline

10.-(1) The general discipline of the children accommodated in a home shall be maintained by the personal influence of the person in charge of the home.

(2) Except as provided in Regulation 11 a child whom it is necessary to punish for misconduct shall be punished only by a temporary loss of recreation or privileges.

(3) A record of any punishment administered to a child shall be made in the log book referred to in the Schedule to these Regulations.

(4) Any case in which a child is punished with abnormal frequency shall be reported by the person in charge of the home to the administering authority who shall arrange for an investigation into the child's condition.

11. Corporal punishment may be exceptionally administered to a child accommodated in a home:

Provided that-

¹³⁴ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 9 October 1940 [ABE.001.006.6531].

¹³⁵ See Statutory Instruments 1951 No. 1217: *Children and Young Persons Local Authority and Voluntary Homes: The Administration of Children's Homes, 1951* (London, 1951) [LEG.001.001.2851-5].

a) such punishment shall not be so administered otherwise than-

i) by a person specifically empowered by the administering authority for the home to administer such punishment: and

ii) in accordance with such rules as to the manner and limits of administering such punishment as may be made by that authority and

b) in the case of a child known by the person empowered as aforesaid to have any physical or mental disability, such punishment shall not be administered without the sanction of the medical officer of the home, which sanction (if given) may be given in relation to that child either generally or in respect of a particular occasion.

As can be seen in regulation 11, corporal punishment was permitted.¹³⁶ The way in which 'the manner and limits of administering' punishment was interpreted by Aberlour is unknown. The regulations came into being at a time of fundamental change in the orphanage as a new warden had been appointed. His personal views on discipline are, however, also unknown. What we do know is that his ideas about child care were generally more progressive.

In January [REDACTED] when the new [REDACTED] BCK [REDACTED] was accused of excessive punishment of a boy, he was recorded as saying that:

...he was in favour of it [corporal punishment] as a deterrent. In this instance extra punishment had been given because the boy had not taken his punishment properly in the first instance. He [REDACTED] BCK [REDACTED] did not lose his temper. It was pointed out to [REDACTED] BCK [REDACTED] that corporal punishment recorded against the boy [REDACTED] during the previous four months did not support the view that it was a deterrent...¹³⁷

The behaviour of the [REDACTED] was put down to 'a certain immaturity' and it was decided that in future corporal punishment would not be given except with the Warden's 'express permission'.¹³⁸

The 1959 statutory regulations for homes were still in place when Aberlour opened small group homes in the 1960s. We have not been provided with an example of what specific guidance, in line with regulations, was given to houseparents, although

¹³⁶ *Children and Young Persons: The Administration of Children's Homes (Scotland) Regulations, 1959*, p. 3 [LEG.001.001.2719].

¹³⁷ [REDACTED] BCK [REDACTED] response as described in [REDACTED] [ABE.001.001.1465].

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* [ABE.001.001.1466].

a note in an inspection file records that '[c]orporal punishment is forbidden in Aberlour Homes unless sanctioned by the warden'.¹³⁹ Yet how to discipline perceived bad behaviour remained an issue, and there was no clear resolution on this for some staff.

Recording

Incidents of staff misconduct were reported to the Board of Governors; for example: '[t]he Governors received the Warden's report on general administration and were informed of a housemaster's misconduct and the action taken.'¹⁴⁰ There is no elaboration in the minutes on this action.

As can be seen from the case of BCK recording of known incidents is—at least sometimes—included in minutes of management meetings. The reference to the boy who was punished by BCK infers that a number of punishments inflicted on him had been recorded, presumably either in an orphanage punishment log or the school log, or both—this is not made clear. In this specific case, there is no evidence that BCK ever recorded this punishment in writing himself; instead, it was entered into the school log by the headteacher following discovery of the incident. We do not have an example of a school log.

The Scottish Office conducted research on recording of corporal punishment in homes during 1968.¹⁴¹ A survey of children's homes was undertaken; a questionnaire was sent out to 176 homes asking about the method of corporal punishment used on different age groups of children and how often this had been used during the year 1967. The return from Aberlour indicated that no corporal punishment was used in any of its homes. The conclusion drawn from this survey, however, was that it was 'difficult to decide how much credence to give to the returns' submitted.¹⁴² Underreporting was strongly suspected.

¹³⁹ NRS ED11 /861/2: *Voluntary Homes, Inspectors' Reports: Belyeoman Road Dunfermline*, Inspection Report 1968 [SGV.001.002.9957]

¹⁴⁰ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 5 September 1963 [ABE.001.006.6484].

¹⁴¹ NRS ED15/564/2: *Discipline: Corporal Punishment in Children's Homes, Survey Feby. 1968 Inspector's Returns* [SGV.001.006.9141-9271].

¹⁴² NRS ED11/854/2: *Corporal Punishment in Children's Homes*, Punishment in Children's Homes, dated 2 August 1968 [SGV.001.008.5008].

c.1970-1990

Guidance

The 1959 regulations on homes remained in place during the 1970s in Scotland. We have no information about what guidance was issued to houseparents in Aberlour's group homes across this period.

An inspection report dating to 1969 for a Trust home in Cumbernauld records that:

Corporal punishment is NOT allowed. Discipline is maintained by personal relationships, but if necessary pocket-money is reduced, or some other small punishment is made. The money is placed in a box and is used to provide extra little treats on holidays or outings.¹⁴³

Recording

We have no information about what advice was given to staff about the recording of punishment; we presume this was supposed to be included in case files and/or, the individual log books kept in homes. We do not have examples of the latter.

Where case files are concerned, we do note some recording of punishments given to children. For example:

[Child] very disobedient. Climbed a high tree and would not come down when asked. Very cheeky. Was sent to bed and not allowed to watch T.V.¹⁴⁴

In this case, the punishment involved the withdrawal of privileges, but physical assault as a means of dealing with a child's behaviour might also be used. In one case where the child was threatening to leave the house without permission the housemother recorded that:

...she wasn't staying in this house, & wanted to be fostered, I took away her clothes, she said she had other clothes to put on, & when she went to school tomorrow she would go away & not come back. When I came out of the bedroom she screamed, I went in and had to slap her. She cried for a while. She then

¹⁴³ NRS ED11/755/2: *Voluntary Homes, Inspectors' Reports: Aberlour Children's Home Cumbernauld*; Inspection Report dated 12 July 1969, emphasis in the original [SGV.001.006.7893].

¹⁴⁴ Aberlour case file; entry dated 26 August 1970 [ABE.001.005.3502].

called me, that she wanted to speak to me. She asked if I could forgive her, & that she was very, very sorry.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ Aberlour case file; memo inserted in case file, signed by E. Smith (likely housemother), undated but c. December 1972-January 1973 [ABE.001.005.3039].

Question 2: Complaints

Made by children and young people

In 1961, management minutes record a former assistant housefather had been reported to the police by Aberlour for 'alleged indecency with boys in the Orphanage'.¹⁴⁶ The source of this information is not stated, but it is possible this was a child or children. The member of staff was said to have been dismissed for 'other reasons'.¹⁴⁷ What the other reasons might have been are not specified. The committee concluded that this matter should also be reported to the Scottish Office.

Other instances of reporting in minutes are equally vague, for example in the following, we do not know who made a complaint, though this may have been a child:

[REDACTED] (Cumbernauld). The Principal informed the Board of Management [REDACTED] having recovered from nervous exhaustion, returned to duty as Assistant Housemother at Dunfermline in February as a temporary measure. However, [REDACTED] had now resigned from the service of the Trust and would be leaving at the beginning of April. The Principal indicated that there was still some doubt about the alleged assault having occurred and [REDACTED] resignation had, therefore, come somewhat as a relief.¹⁴⁸

There is no uniformity about how such complaints might be handled; a great deal depended on the view of individual wardens/directors.

In 1970, a member of staff provided information about practices in one of the small group homes and initially the Principal met these revelations with disbelief:

The Principal reported on an incident connected with this home. On the morning of Tuesday, [REDACTED] Miss Laurie of the Social Work Services Group (Home Department) telephoned the Principal and reported that she had received a telephone call from one of the Inspectors in Edinburgh regarding an allegation made by an ex member of the Trust's staff to the effect that the enuretics (wet beds) at 'The Dowans' had been called "filthy pigs" and had had their noses rubbed in their wet sheets. It was pointed out that this information was also being passed on to the Director of Social Work for Banff. At this point,

¹⁴⁶ Aberlour Minute Book, entry 3 August 1961 [ABE.001.001.0851].

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. [ABE.001.001.0851].

¹⁴⁸ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 29 March 1973 [ABE.001.001.7052].

Miss Laurie could give the Principal no further information, but they were endeavouring to get more details of the allegation. [...]

The Principal had been horrified to learn of this as **BCI/BCJ** the **BCI/BCJ** at 'The Dowans', had a very good relationship with the children. An immediate investigation was made at 'The Dowans' by the Principal and the Deputy Principal. Naturally, **BCI/BCJ** as one would expect, were very indignant and had flatly denied knowledge of any such treatment. They also had felt that none of their junior staff were capable of such action. At present, according to **BCJ** 'The Dowans' only had one persistent bed wetter and another boy who was an occasional bed wetter. **BCJ** had, however, sited an incident to the Principal when she had lost her temper and had called a child "a dirty little brat", but when this incident was explained to the Committee, they were in complete agreement that any housemother or parent would have acted in precisely the same manner. It was explained to the Committee that the practice as laid down by the Trust was to treat bed wetters like any ordinary child. Enuresis was ignored in so far as the children were not punished in any way. They were given clean sheets and pyjamas, and soiled sheets were sent for laundering.

Knowing **BCI/BCJ** the Principal personally could not believe that this allegation could be true, but of course, it was impossible for her to state categorically that it did not happen.¹⁴⁹

A few months later it transpired that a junior member of staff (an assistant) had applied for a post with a local authority and treatment of children who wet the bed in her current employment at the Dowans had been revealed during interview. The interviewer had heard a similar account by another former Aberlour staff member so on this second occasion decided to pass the information on to the Social Work Services Group. The situation deteriorated when the housefather, suspecting correctly who had passed on this story, attempted to intimidate the young woman:

BCI had suspected that she had been the person responsible for the allegation and had made very serious threats to the girl.

[...]

BCI/BCJ had then been asked to resign in the light of further information received. **BCJ** immediately agreed to resign, but **BCI** did not. [...]

¹⁴⁹ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 2 July 1970 [ABE.001.006.6440]. We have not been given access to any written policy on dealing with children who wet the bed. The Dowans had formerly housed the nursery school, when this closed it was reopened as a small group home.

BCI/BCJ were, in fact, asked to resign on the grounds of lack of co-operation with senior staff during the course of an official enquiry as at the time there had been no definite proof that they had committed any of the actions suggested. BCI/BCJ had been extremely unpleasant about the whole situation and had been asked to leave the premises by early evening.¹⁵⁰

The immediate dismissal of BCI/BCJ meant that relief staff (possibly relatively new assistants) had to be moved in and children moved out in haste. Events at the home were reported as follows:

A near riot had occurred when the children got completely out of the staff's control. All the boys had been on the roof of the house and had been pelting the staff with green apples and squirting water from a stirrup pump. They had also started two fires in outside buildings. The children had painted themselves and were in a very wet and dirty state. The Principal and Deputy Principal had been notified by the staff of the incident. They immediately went to 'The Dowans' and, order was restored. Three boys who were the ring leaders were removed to Aberdeen and the home was now back to normal.¹⁵¹

Trouble at this home continued because of staffing issues:

The number of children at this home had been reduced from 20 to 12; with two more discharges likely to take place by the end of October. Some difficulties were still being experienced with the children, mainly due to the temporary staff there not being particularly capable of coping with the situation. In view of the current and past difficulties, the Principal felt it would be to the advantage of children, staff and administration if 'The Dowans' could be prematurely closed by the beginning of November. It was anticipated that this could be accomplished by transferring the remaining children, two families, to the Reception Home in Aberdeen until such times as the Stirling and Hamilton homes were ready.¹⁵²

What should be noted in this context is that throughout this timeframe children who came into the care of voluntary providers like Aberlour were young people regularly labelled as 'difficult', 'maladjusted' or 'disturbed', based upon their previous family circumstances and upbringing before they arrived in care. There was rarely any allowance made for the experiences they might have encountered once in the care system as being equal contributors to their overall condition. This made the whole

¹⁵⁰ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 1 September 1970 [ABE.001.006.6441].

¹⁵¹ Ibid. [ABE.001.006.6441].

¹⁵² Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 6 October 1970 [ABE.001.006.6443].

business of raising complaints fraught with pre-judgement and skewed towards a difficulty with believing children's testimony over that of adults.

By the 1980s, there was growing knowledge among professionals interested in childcare that the system was a contributing factor in causing behaviours associated with chronic distress. The increasing emphasis placed upon preventative measures that avoided the need for children from disadvantaged backgrounds to be taken into residential care was a significant reflection of such awareness.¹⁵³ Care providers, however, sometimes struggled to acknowledge this when attempting to deal with complaints, as in the following example. Commenting on the complaint made by a parent about violent behaviour of staff towards a child the director (Gerald E. Barlow) stated that:

It has to be recognised that this home caters for children and young people who have previously been identified as "difficult" or "disturbed". Such children often express past traumatic experiences or present stress deriving from interaction with their families, through violent or aggressive behaviour which requires careful but firm control. They may also interpret behaviour by adults in a way which is not intended by the adults concerned, but is coloured by the child's past experiences. Firmness and control by staff is thus often perceived quite differently by children who have formed good relationships with their carers than is the case in the initial months of their placements before such relationships can be established. The incident concerning Trevor Francis [staff member] was interpreted rather differently by the other boy who witnessed the events. [REDACTED] description of other events has differed from those of staff, e.g. being "made" to do jobs or chores, when he has appeared to staff to be quite enthusiastic about doing them.

It is clear that some sort of physical involvement has undoubtedly occurred at the times mentioned, and it appears that both incidents have also involved [REDACTED] initiating physical violence. In that frame of mind he may well have seen staff members attempts to control him as being aggressive, and been resentful of them.

It is our continuing concern to ensure that a high level of good practice is maintained, particularly in a setting where disturbed and disturbing behaviour by the children can raise anxiety levels and test the professional behaviour of the

¹⁵³ For example, see Strathclyde Regional Council, *Room to Grow: Report of a special officer/member group of the council's social work committee on child care in Strathclyde, Report and Discussion*, November 1979. [first published in an abridged form in 1978] [GLA.001.001.1563-72].

staff. We are, therefore, taking this opportunity to re-emphasise the necessary attitudes and practice required of staff in this setting. Some shift in practice may have occurred in the absence of the Project Leader and generated by those substituting for him being over-anxious to establish their leadership.

[...]

However, it has been made very clear to both Mr. Francis and Mr. McCorquodale and the whole staff that any future indication of unacceptable behaviour by staff will be taken very seriously.

I am aware that these comments and conclusions on the matter will probably not be satisfying to ██████ father. However, I can only assure you that we have tried to take as balanced and objective a view as possible, being fair both to the child whose rights must be protected and also to staff who are working in a difficult situation.¹⁵⁴

The behaviour of staff is implicated in this complaint (suggesting Aberlour still had some staffing problems) yet the onus is still placed on the child—it is inferred that he may have misinterpreted the behaviour of staff because of his earlier experiences outside of Aberlour's care. Later in this letter, it is suggested that extra training on how to deal with challenging behaviour by children was to be implemented.

Complaints made by children might result in exposing staffing issues that management at Aberlour struggled to confront. Indeed, the voices of staff might drown out children's complaints as happened in the following example. In 1979 the director of Aberlour attempted to get external assistance to resolve a complaint made by children at the home in Paisley. The director therefore made a request to the Social Work Services Group (SWSG) to arbitrate (see also section V: Inspection).¹⁵⁵ In this case, the deputy director for the Trust (Margaret Ferguson) had criticised the disciplinary methods used in the home. She made these criticisms allegedly based upon complaints made initially by a parent, but later confirmed when the children were interviewed by the Trust's social worker (Jane Ferguson). The social worker was convinced the family of six children were telling the truth about the treatment they had received from the home's staff. The deputy officer-in-charge of the home had thereafter threatened to resign, and it was stated by the director that there was 'an

¹⁵⁴ Aberlour Minute Book, entry: letter from director (Gerald E. Barlow) to Mr Burt, Area Officer, Central Region Social Work Department dated 17 December 1985 [ABE.001.001.0763].

¹⁵⁵ NRS ED11/850: Letter from the director, Mr Church to Miss Beti Jones (SWSG) dated 15 March 1979 [SGV.001.006.8637-8].

almost anarchical situation in the home' regarding relations between management and the home's staff.¹⁵⁶

The director of Aberlour wanted SWSG via their advisory arm (the Central Advisory Service - CAS) to make an 'independent assessment' of the situation.¹⁵⁷ He claimed that no corroboration for the children's allegations could be found and implied the parent's testimony might be unreliable as she was 'given to excess drinking', thereby, implicitly dismissing the testimony of the children and the parent.¹⁵⁸ This attempt to involve SWSG was treated with caution at the Scottish Office. A previous incident at Aberdeen had resulted in bad publicity and an industrial tribunal so in the case of the Paisley home the director attempted to involve the SWSG.¹⁵⁹ However, they were, as usual, circumspect in their reply, and the advice offered showed awareness of the wider difficulties then being experienced by Aberlour's director in respect of staff relations. SWSG took the view that:

Mr Church would be well advised to report briefly to his own Committee that this complaint has been received and the action he has taken for dealing with the matter. This may well prove to be all that is necessary. However, by the time this stage of events is over, the Tribunal on the Aberdeen episode should be over and we can then include a visit to the Paisley Home as well as to the one in Aberdeen as part of routine CAS [Central Advisory Service] work.¹⁶⁰

Made by staff

Staff did occasionally make complaints about the conduct of other staff members. For example, in September 1944 an encounter between a housemaster and the [REDACTED], Mr AIZ [REDACTED] resulted in Mr AIZ [REDACTED] using 'threatening and abusive language'.¹⁶¹ This was reported to the Warden, but the housemaster also reported it to the police. The outcome of this was that AIZ [REDACTED] gave a month's notice, but the housemaster was rebuked for having reported the matter to the police.¹⁶² The

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. Letter from the director, Mr Church to Miss Beti Jones (SWSG) dated 15 March 1979 [SGV.001.006.8638].

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. [SGV.001.006.8637-8]. He seemingly invited in external arbitration following an earlier case in Aberdeen which escalated to a case of unfair dismissal.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. [SGV.001.006.8637-8].

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. [SGV.001.006.8637-8]. See also page 42 of this report for further discussion of the Aberdeen incident.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., Letter from Miss Beti Jones (SWSG) dated 19 March 1979 to several others in SWSG [SGV.001.006.8636].

¹⁶¹ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 28 September 1944 [ABE.001.001.1413].

¹⁶² Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 28 September 1944 [ABE.001.001.1412-3]

housemaster later told the secretary to the Clyde Committee about his experiences of Aberlour.¹⁶³

Another example is the letter written by Miss Somerville to the RSSPCC general secretary that we have previously cited.¹⁶⁴ In this she expresses concerns about, amongst other things, the overworking of children and unacceptable punishments given to children by staff. In later periods, we see occasional mentions of complaints being made by teachers and childcare staff—the allegations made against BCK BCK being a relevant example.¹⁶⁵

In the case of the home in Paisley, in addition to complaints made by a parent about the ill-treatment of her children, other staff members had made complaints about the officer-in-charge. During investigations of the ill-treatment allegations, staff revealed their difficulties and this information formed part of the Director's request for SWSG to conduct an independent assessment. One staff member allegedly stated to the director, Mr Church, that she had been 'ridiculed by the Officer-in-Charge in front of children'.¹⁶⁶ Mr Church told SWSG that there was a high turnover of staff in this home with many only staying a few weeks in post.¹⁶⁷ It was further alleged that staff were afraid of the officer-in-charge, though the deputy director of the Trust had been unable to encourage staff to reveal the exact reasons why staff felt intimidated.¹⁶⁸ Incidents such as this and at the Clifton Road home in Aberdeen (detailed below) reveal that there was a lack of trust between residential staff and their managers.

Aberlour's staff were not unionised and staff who ran into difficulties, at least during the 1970s, had only one recourse—to speak with the director who, from the available information, appears not to have been a sympathetic individual.¹⁶⁹ After a highly publicised dismissal of houseparents in Aberdeen in 1979, the aftermath of which

¹⁶³ NRS ED11/443: Note of a meeting with Cardno completed by Mr Hewitson Brown dated 26 November 1946 [SGV.001.002.4714-8].

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., Letter from Miss Somerville dated 12 April 1946, addressed to Mr Cumming Forsyth, general secretary of the RSSPCC and forwarded by the latter to Mr Hewitson Brown of the Scottish Home Department 22 April 1946 [SGV.001.002.4818-21].

¹⁶⁵ See Aberlour Minute Book, various entries from January 1959 [ABE.001.001.1464-9].

¹⁶⁶ NRS ED11/850: Letter from the director, Mr Church to Miss Beti Jones (SWSG) dated 15 March 1979 [SGV.001.006.8637].

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. [SGV.001.006.8637-8].

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. [SGV.001.006.8637-8].

¹⁶⁹ See NRS ED11/851: Voluntary Homes Administration; copy of 'Statement' re Terms and Conditions of Employment by Aberlour Trust dated October 1979 [SGV.001.006.8879-80].

involved complaints from a local MP escalated to the Secretary of State and involvement by representatives of the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU), it was decided that the Central Advisory Service (CAS) of the SWSG would conduct a formal review of childcare practice by Aberlour. The subsequent publicity that this case attracted in the press brought the Trust into disrepute. Very briefly, the case is summarised in a letter written by the then MP for Aberdeen North, Robert Hughes, to the Secretary of State, Bruce Millan:

██████████ has been employed as residential child care officer by the Aberlour Child Care Trust for some 5½ years until her employment was suddenly terminated on 10th January 1979. ██████████ is a teacher of the mentally handicapped, and is employed by Grampian Regional Council. ██████████ is expected to give support to ██████████ in ██████████ employment with the Aberlour Child Care Trust.

██████████ employment was reasonably uneventful until a ██████████ left Clifton Road, where she had stayed since the age of 13. ██████████ had felt that ██████████ had formed an unsuitable association with a boy and had tried to discourage her from meeting him; ██████████ left the home, and it is alleged that she told the woman with whom she went to live some unsavoury tale about ██████████ behaviour. This woman telephoned ██████████ and remonstrated with ██████████. ██████████ admits that ██████████ was rude in reply, telling the woman to 'mind her own bloody business'.

Shortly after this, Mr Church, the Director of the Aberlour Child Trust arrived at Clifton Road, where it is alleged that his behaviour was rude and obstreperous, and told ██████████ that he would issue an official warning about ██████████ conduct. However, without further warning, on 5th January Mr Church said that for medical reasons either the children in the home must be removed from ██████████ or ██████████ would have to be removed from the children.

On 7th January, the children were in fact removed without warning, to a home in Bridge of Don; they were naturally in a most distressed condition. The circumstances at Bridge of Don were unsuitable, as the residential officer there was about to leave. The children, six of them, returned of their own will to Clifton Road. However, under the circumstances their Regional Authorities, Grampian and Strathclyde, made other arrangements for their care.

██████████ concedes that ██████████ is showing anxiety, but argues that it began with proper concern over the fear that ██████████ while in ██████████ care, was getting into bad company, and that it has continued only because of the way in which ██████████ have been treated subsequently. No evidence has been

produced by Mr Church for his statements about 'medical reasons' and indeed the dismissal notice is not specific in giving reasons for dismissal.

██████████ allege that since Mr Church became Director some 3½ years ago he has a history of dismissing employees without cause. There is some evidence of this in the dismissal of the depute director of the Trust, where it was later agreed that there had been wrongful dismissal. [...]

The general situation as described to me is one of bureaucratic insensitivity. It is alleged that members of the Board of the Trust do not visit the home in Aberdeen, and that any attempt to question Mr Church's actions is dismissed without proper inquiry.¹⁷⁰

During the late 1970s, some staff were unhappy about their working conditions and joined unions.¹⁷¹ Attempts were made to get the organisation to recognise union representation, but allegedly, these were resisted.¹⁷²

Made by others

How complaints were dealt with may have depended on their source. In 1950, the Bishop of Moray informed ██████████^{BLK} that:

A lady told me that the RSSPCC had told her that [child] an inmate of Aberlour had been cruelly beaten & had run away three times and was last picked up in Inverness. I told this good lady that the story was most unlikely and that if he ran away he would quite rightly be beaten.¹⁷³

The Bishop urged ██████████ to write to the secretary of the RSSPCC and establish the facts. This he did, stating:

I want you to know that I take a serious view, and my opinion is supported by our Management Committee, of any R.S.S.P.C.C. Inspector who is guilty of banding about reports or information received from your headquarters for which there is no foundation. If this particular Inspector told this story to one

¹⁷⁰ NRS ED11/850: *Aberlour Child Care Trust—Clifton Road*, letter from Robert Hughes MP for Aberdeen North to Bruce Millan dated 13 February 1979 [SGV.001.006.8671-2].

¹⁷¹ See for example NRS ED11/850: *Aberlour Child Care Trust-Clifton Road*; note to Mr Fairgrieve re. Aberlour Child Care Trust and Mr Robert Hughes, MP dated 24 May 1979 [SGV.001.006.8707].

¹⁷² See for example, NRS, ED11/850; draft SWSG note, unsigned, dated 3/5/79. In this, it is recorded that 'the Transport and General Workers Union, which represents a number of the staff in the Trust's Homes, is currently in dispute with the Trust about union recognition and that ACAS is also involved.' [SGV.001.006.8498].

¹⁷³ Sample of Aberlour case files, 1950s case 2, letter from the Bishop of Moray dated June 24 1950 [ABE.001.009.1407].

lady he might well have told it to half a dozen and if the lady has spoken to the Bishop about the "cruel beating" she might very well have spoken to half a dozen of her friends and so the pot is kept boiling with all this damaging and distorted gossip and pitter-patter. The facts are I spanked the little scallywag as I would have spanked my own son for absconding on three occasions. I shall be glad if you will take action with this particular member of your staff and I should feel justified in demanding an apology for propagating such a fantastically distorted story. I am quite prepared to give full details and full explanation of the way I handled this situation concerning the boy [child's name] who absconded on three occasions, perhaps influenced by the mollycoddling he received under their matron of Levishie Lodge where formerly he was housed and from which he and his brothers were removed by the Port of Glasgow Children's Officer on the grounds that Levishie Lodge was not a suitable place for the training of healthy, high spirited and growing laddies.

I shall await with interest the explanation which your Inspector has to offer for such serious indiscretion.¹⁷⁴

In a carefully worded reply, the RSSPCC's secretary implied that he was aware that existing methods of punishment at Aberlour extended beyond spanking, commenting that 'I was informed that methods of disciplining boys at Aberlour seemed to be based on the use of the strap.'¹⁷⁵

Following the incident recorded at Clifton Road two advisors within SWSG and several representatives of the TGWU met noting that staff had made complaints:

1. At the beginning of the meeting I [Mr John I Smith, SWSG] indicated the context in which it was held, a request by TGW for a meeting to acquaint SWSG with the facts of bad child care practice by Aberlour Trust. Mr. Morran [Branch Official, TGWU] sought to find out the present position vis a vis the request from Robert Hughes MP to the Secretary of State for an enquiry into the affairs of the Trust. He was obviously aware of the content of [under-secretary of state] Mr McElhone's reply, and I indicated that there had been no change in that position. We were aware that the Tribunal had given its findings and were now

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., Letter to Mr Cumming Forsyth (RSSPCC) from [BLK] 30 June 1950 [ABE.001.009.1409].

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., reply from Mr Cumming Forsyth to [BLK] 14 July 1950 [ABE.001.009.1412]. At this time it was still common practice in many homes, including local authority homes, to remove older boys from care facilities where the person in charge was female. It is likely this is what happened to this child. Such removals could cause distress and in some instances split sibling groups. As [BLK] letter makes clear, the boy was running away in order to try to return to Levishie Lodge. The secretary ended his reply by offering to look into [BLK] fears that 'Levishie Lodge was not a suitable place for the training of healthy, high spirited and growing laddies.'

awaiting the stated reasons. Mr Morran indicated that these were expected in two weeks' time.

2. Mr Morran then went on to indicate the concern of the Transport and General Workers Union that there was insufficient public control of the Aberlour Trust in relation to its responsibilities for the care of children. He mentioned the difficulties of control resulting from local authorities using homes outside their geographical areas and indicated as an example that Strathclyde Local Authority were unaware of many aspects relating to the care of their children in other Aberlour Homes to which the Trade Union had been able to bring to their attention. In addition the Trustees of the Aberlour Trust exercised little control and met infrequently. The Union had discovered that both COSLA and the Association of Directors of Education (later found to be inaccurate) could be represented on the governing body but that no current nominations had been made. I tried to determine whether there was anything of special concern about the position of the Aberlour Trust as opposed to other voluntary child care organisations but the officials were not concerned with other bodies as the TGWU did not have staff of these organisations in membership. I mentioned some of the safeguards in the present arrangements of local and central government. This led to some specific questioning from the Union officials on the powers of the Secretary of State under Section 6 of the 1968 Act.

3. The Union officials mentioned their concern about victimisation of staff who are members of the Union and how this in turn was having affects [sic] on children. Instances were given of persons who had previous good records of employment being confronted with allegations concerning bad practice of children or unsubstantiated allegations by parents. The Trust had initiated disciplinary proceedings in some cases and in others jeopardised the authority of staff and in one case mentioning to one of the children involved that the member of staff involved would be leaving. There was a feeling that there was a good deal of anxiety and unsettledness among the children who are involved at the present time.

4. The Union officials confirmed that they saw the purpose of the meeting to acquaint us with the facts that had come to their knowledge and to suggest that there was a case for an overall examination into the way the Trust is managed. It was pointed out to them that if an enquiry of this sort was undertaken by officers of the Secretary of State it could not become involved with industrial relations matters.

[...]

7. The Union officials wished to get some indication of when SWSG would be prepared to indicate its intention whether or not to take any action. He pressed

this point particularly because he felt he needed to know in order that if necessary he could pursue other methods. In the present circumstances I was not able to give any assurances on timing, mentioning some of the current constraints which were appreciated, but I did give an assurance that we would notify the Union of any action we had decided to take. Although this was an unsatisfactory arrangement as far as the Union was concerned they accepted that this was as much as I could give in the present circumstances.¹⁷⁶

The 'present circumstances' were the ongoing interest in the Trust by Robert Hughes MP, as well as the industrial tribunal brought by the sacked housemother in Aberdeen. The numerous complaints received meant that although SWSG successfully resisted the call made by Hughes for an inquiry, they were duty bound to offer advice to Aberlour about their services and this duly took place later in 1979.¹⁷⁷

Based on the available relevant documentation, we can see that as we reach the end of the timeframe under consideration there was more transparency and a willingness to work with other agencies to resolve problems. For example, in 1988 the following is reported in management meeting minutes:

No further action was taken by the Procurator Fiscal concerning the member of staff suspended during enquiries concerning two allegations (of assault and sexual misconduct). The staff member has returned to duty but in a different part of the project.¹⁷⁸

Unfortunately, we have little further information about these specific allegations which occurred at the Trust's Sycamore project, but Aberlour's management claim to have acted in accordance with advice from other agencies involved: in this case Tayside Region.¹⁷⁹

What complaints procedures, if any, were in place and how did they work?

We have no note of any formal, written complaints procedures being in place across this timeframe—though these may have existed. In the context of the orphanage it is certain that all complaints were the province of the Warden. Following closure of the

¹⁷⁶ NRS ED11/850: *Voluntary Homes: Aberlour Child care Trust (Action on Question by Robert Hughes MP)*; Note of Meeting, signed John I Smith, dated 11 May 1979. [SGV.001.006.8518-9].

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, [see for example, SGV.001.006.8475-80 and 8495-8501], and NRS ED11/851 [see for example SGV.001.006.8765-9, 9009 and 9098-9]. These files contain many documents related to this complaint.

¹⁷⁸ Aberlour Minute Book entry entitled: 'Director's Report for the Governors' Meeting to be held on Tuesday, 13th September 1988', p. 53, consulted at Aberlour Headquarters in December 2018.

¹⁷⁹ Aberlour Minute Book entry dated 12 July 1988, consulted at Aberlour Headquarters.

orphanage it is unlikely this changed much in the proceeding decade. It is difficult to state with any degree of certainty what guidance was given to staff from the late 1970s onwards; but judging by alleged difficulties that existed between Aberlour's management and their staff, employees placed little faith in turning to management for help. Members of the board of governors do not appear to have been approachable either and it may be concluded that they tended always to take the part of management—or at least, this was the perception of staff. In the case of the Clifton Road incident, the member of staff turned to her MP for support.

Question 3: Inspection and Monitoring

c.1930-1950

Inspection Regimes

Across most of this timeframe, staff of the Scottish Home Department inspected Aberlour. We have some examples of inspection reports from the mid-1930s; these and other references in Aberlour minutes indicate that the home was probably visited annually. The holiday home—Hopeman—was also inspected. The content of surviving reports gives us information about the kinds of issues that inspectors noted including staffing, management and oversight, sleeping accommodation, recreation, after care, discipline and punishment, and the meals and diet provided.¹⁸⁰ For example, in 1934, inspectors concluded that:

The diet needs a great deal of improvement; the food is continually "pappy", and, so far as we could gather, is eaten entirely with a spoon. The milk supply is adequate (1 pint per day per head). It is understood that, at the last meeting of the Governing Body, the question of diet was raised, and the Warden had proposed to have an expert dietician to advise. The amount per inmate per annum in the 1933-34 Report, expended on diet, is stated to be £12:19:2d. This would seem to be a fairly good figure, although freights are high, and food consequently dear.

The cleaning of the tin bowls between courses leaves much to be desired, the bowl being cleaned with a piece of bread between courses. Much might be done to make the service of food more attractive.¹⁸¹

Following the 1934 visit, an inspector sent the Warden the following:

I enclose a copy of the Ministry of Health pamphlets, "The Criticism and Improvement of Diets" and "Diets in Poor Law Children's Homes". On page 11 of the latter pamphlet you will see specimen menus for 200 children for 8 days, and a note of the estimated cost on page 10. It is appreciated, of course, that, in a place like Aberlour, the cost would vary.

¹⁸⁰ NRS ED11/443 *Voluntary Homes. Annual Returns etc.: Aberlour Orphanage, Aberlour, Banffshire: 1933-1955*. See various files containing reports, minutes and correspondence [for example SGV.001.002.4630-8 and 4644-5].

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, Inspection report, 1934 [SGV.001.002.4769].

I hope you will not think that we wish to prevent you from getting an expert dietician in by sending you the pamphlets, but you may find some useful hints in them meantime.¹⁸²

When inspectors arrived in 1935, clearly geared up to look at dietary arrangements, they were pleasantly surprised:

The domestic arrangements showed an improvement. The old female cook has gone from the boys' section and a new male chef has been appointed, with good results. [...] In the girls' section. The dinner which we saw being cooked for the boys consisted of thick soup made from stock and meat, and semolina pudding. By a new arrangement the food is served hotter than it was on the occasion of our last visit. Girls no longer assist in the boys' section and the chef's assistants are boys who are being trained for house service. The Warden informed us that he is able to place any amount of boys after this training [and] the Matron is delighted with the improvements in the diet. [...]

We suggested that there was rather a long fast between 5 o'clock and 8 a.m. the next morning, and that the Warden might consider giving, particularly the older boys and girls, something to eat by way of a supper. He promised to consider this, although he pointed out that it was a question of finance.¹⁸³

The Warden estimated it would cost £250 per year to provide a cup of cocoa and a currant bun but that this had been taken forward.¹⁸⁴ In minutes of a meeting of the governors in March 1936, it is noted that another inspection had taken place and that the issue of a supper had not yet been resolved. We have not been able to locate a copy of this report.

Anxiety about this continued into the 1940s. In 1947 an inspector records that on the next visit effort should be made to see punishment books and diet sheets.¹⁸⁵

Inspectors also noted the work done by older children: '16 senior girls work as assistant maids in kitchen and boys' blocks - housework.' These children were stated to be paid 'at the standard rates' although the amount is not specified.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸² Ibid., Letter addressed to Dean Wolfe, dated 8 August 1934, writer unknown [SGV.001.002.4803].

¹⁸³ Ibid., Inspection Report, dated 26 March 1935 [SGV.001.002.4757].

¹⁸⁴ Aberlour Minute Book entry dated 13 March 1936 [ABE.001.006.6466].

¹⁸⁵ NRS ED11/443 *Voluntary Homes. Annual Returns etc.: Aberlour Orphanage, Aberlour, Banffshire: 1933-1955*, departmental minute dated 17 October 1947 [SGV.001.002.9409].

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., Inspection Report headed 'Scottish Central After Care Council', dated 7 August 1934. [SGV.001.002.4767]

During the interwar years, Aberlour received relatively few children from poor law authorities. However, the numbers of children placed by public assistance authorities possibly increased during the 1940s. It is possible these children were visited by representatives from authorities, but we lack evidence of this.

External inspection by the Home Department seems to have been very regular at Aberlour during the 1930s and 1940s, and, in relative terms, these reports and especially the minutes that accompany them on file, are quite detailed. Both the regularity with which the orphanage was visited, and the content of inspection reports, suggest that inspectors were not entirely satisfied with care at Aberlour Orphanage. One inspection report states that: 'It would seem that local authorities use this Home as a dump for backward/children.'¹⁸⁷

The orphanage was inspected again in 1948 when new legislation came into place. Following this visit several criteria were raised, which inspectors thought should be looked at when the orphanage was next inspected in 1949. According to one inspector—Mr Cunningham—the following merited attention:

As regards the staff and organisation, [Mr Cunningham] preferred to suspend judgement. He could not reconcile what he saw with the Warden 's account of the Housemaster and Housemistress system and suggested that further enquiry might clear this up. [...]

Mr Cunningham was also interested in the grouping arrangements in the Orphanage which are on an age and sex basis, not on the basis of a family group of mixed ages and perhaps mixed sexes. Even if the family basis were right ...something more could be done to associate the older and the younger children. [...] [I]information was given that members of the same family do associate, but it was not made clear when and where they met.

He considers that it would be interesting to know more about the actual nature and operation of the elaborate system of awards and punishments of which he had occasional glimpses – how the sweeties and the pocket money were given or withheld and the nature and extent of physical correction. He asks that the Inspectors will keep an eye on the medical arrangements. Reliance is now apparently placed entirely on the National Health Service and he would like to be assured that the routine examination is adequate. He suggests that Dr

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., Inspection Report dated 16 October 1947 [SGV.001.002.4676].

Seymour [Health Inspector] might take an opportunity of looking into this matter.¹⁸⁸

The school was also subject to visits by inspectors of schools. We cannot state with any accuracy how often this took place and extant records indicate that during the 1930s remarks made by school inspectors were short and perfunctory.¹⁸⁹ It is probable there were few inspections during the war years.

Internal Monitoring

Supervision of the day-to-day running of Aberlour Orphanage was undertaken by the Warden, sometimes a sub-warden and a lady superintendent. We have no information about whether governors or the board of management conducted any form of routine inspection of the children in this period. A very large amount of authority was vested in the Warden and all other staff were answerable to him. From correspondence in case files, all communication with outside agencies about children's welfare was undertaken by and through the Warden or, in his absence, the Sub-Warden. Given the large number of children resident in this timeframe, it is doubtful how well versed the Warden could have been with individual cases, unless the children proved troublesome in some respects and so came to notice on a regular basis.

Children were inspected by a medical officer on admission, but we have little information about subsequent checks on their health unless illness presented.

c.1950-1970

Inspection Regimes

Home Department inspection continued after the 1948 legislation. In available documentation, visits are noted to the orphanage (closed 1967) and to individual group homes in the following years:

- 1959¹⁹⁰
- 1961¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., Home Department minute dated 24 December 1948, recounting findings from a recent visit of inspection. [SGV.001.002.4637].

¹⁸⁹ See NRS ED18/776: *School Inspectors' Reports* [SGV.001.002.4885-5189].

¹⁹⁰ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 29 May 1959 [ABE.001.006.6595].

¹⁹¹ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 3 August 1961 [ABE.001.001.1470].

- 1963¹⁹²
- 1964¹⁹³
- 1967; 1968; 1969, 1970 (Dunfermline).¹⁹⁴
- 1967 (Kirkcaldy).¹⁹⁵
- 1968 (Clifton Road, Aberdeen).¹⁹⁶
- 1969 (Cumbernauld)¹⁹⁷

As SED did not routinely visit homes annually, it is likely these are the majority of known inspections. In addition, the Princess Margaret Nursery School at Aberlour was inspected in 1953, 1954, 1955, 1957, and 1958.¹⁹⁸

Post-1947, when regulations for boarding out were introduced, local authorities who boarded out children within voluntary homes had to visit them within a month of their admission and thereafter six-monthly. We do not know how often local authority visitors came to Aberlour to visit children in their care during the 1950s.

The 1950 report made by the Scottish Advisory Council endorsed the continuation of six-monthly visits to children boarded out to voluntary homes by local authorities. A Children's Officer had to visit individual children; records of such visits were kept in the files maintained by the authorities to which we have not had access. It is therefore impossible to know how often children were, in fact, visited.

The frequency of visitation was increased following the introduction of new regulations in 1959. Successive inspection reports of Aberlour's small homes reveal that visits by Children's Officers in the 1960s were uneven. For example, at the home in Dunfermline where ten children are noted, nine had been placed there by

¹⁹² Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 28th November 1963; this full-scale inspection was prompted by 'the earlier misconduct of a houseparent'. It was followed up by an annual medical inspection [ABE.001.006.6638].

¹⁹³ Aberlour Minute Book entry; this was a medical inspection, done on 9 September 1964 [ABE.001.006.6674].

¹⁹⁴ NRS ED11/861/2: *Voluntary Homes, Inspectors' Reports: Bellyeoman Road Dunfermline* [SGV.001.002.9953-60 and 9966-7 and 9971-3].

¹⁹⁵ NRS ED11/862: *Aberlour Orphanage Trust: Sycamore Cottage, Kirkcaldy and Bellyeoman Road, Dunfermline* [SGV.001.004.9725].

¹⁹⁶ ED11/793: *Aberlour Trust Children's Homes, 311 Clifton Road, Aberdeen, Inspection Report*. [NRS.001.001.1887-90].

¹⁹⁷ NRS ED11/755/2: *Voluntary Homes, Inspectors' Reports: Aberlour Children's Home Cumbernauld; Inspection Report* dated 12 July 1969 [SGV.001.006.7891-4].

¹⁹⁸ NRS ED11/445/1: *Voluntary Homes, Annual Returns Princess Margaret Nursery School, Aberlour Orphanage, Banffshire* [SGV.001.002.6097-6100].

Edinburgh, Clydebank, Nairn and Kirkcaldy. The officers from the former three all visited, though how often is not specified; the officer from Kirkcaldy did not and preferred to keep in touch by telephone.¹⁹⁹

Internal Monitoring

At committee meetings, the Warden reported visits made by Governors under a Visiting Rota scheme; these were recorded in the Log Books of homes.²⁰⁰ From the limited example of minutes made available to us, we cannot ascertain how often this happened.

As we have noted, from 1970, efforts were made to decentralise services with the employment of social workers:

It was strongly recommended by the Principal that the Trust should appoint a suitably qualified Senior Social Worker to be based in the central belt. A criticism of voluntary organisations in the past was that many voluntary organisations did not have Social Workers and in future this was going to be a very important function if the Trust was to maintain all the requirements that had been laid down under the new Social Work (Scotland) Act and the Regulations for the Administration of Residential Establishments.²⁰¹

The future move from headquarters in Aberdeen to the central belt was also noted as important in 1972 with the director commenting that when managers visited the central belt homes, visits had to be planned, and therefore staff were aware that they would be arriving. Aberlour's management knew that these were ineffective for monitoring how well the home was functioning.²⁰² When the headquarters transferred to Stirling, those homes still situated in the northeast must then have experienced something of the same problem in reverse. We do not have any note of how this was managed, but it is likely that the social worker who covered this area took up this responsibility.

¹⁹⁹ NRS ED11/861/2: *Voluntary Homes, Inspectors' Reports: Bellyeoman Road Dunfermline*, Inspection Report 1968, Appendix A [SGV.001.002.9960].

²⁰⁰ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 5 September 1963 [ABE.001.006.6484].

²⁰¹ Aberlour Minute Book, entry entitled 'memorandum on Future Policy', dated 18 February 1970 [ABE.001.006.7337].

²⁰² Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 30 May 1972 [ABE.001.006.7339].

c.1970-1990

Inspection Regimes

Interaction with central government and local authorities ceased to be based on routine inspection in the early 1970s. In this period, children's homes were registered by local authorities who had responsibility for visiting these and for visiting individual children placed there, according to statutory regulations. Within Aberlour's homes, children might come from several different local authorities and how often social workers visited might depend on distances involved. We have no note of how often, or even whether this happened with any degree of regularity. Increasingly, and in the context of staff shortages within local authority social work departments, liaising between local authority social workers and residential facilities might be desk-based and done by telephone and letter.

Assistance from the Scottish Office was provided on request or, occasionally, by intervention (usually because of external complaint), through the Central Advisory Service (CAS) of the Social Work Services Group (SWSG). Following the incident at Clifton Road Home in Aberdeen, and as we have noted elsewhere, Aberlour requested assistance from CAS with problems they were having in a home recently opened in Paisley:

Mr Church telephoned this morning to ask if he could have help from CAS in resolving a difficulty in one of their children's homes (in Paisley). Apparently the children have made some complaints about ill-treatment by the staff, and he is looking for an independent way of investigating these which could avoid the recriminations he is experiencing over the way his organisation handled a staffing problem in another home...

My response to Mr Church's request was to mention the general desire of CAS to be helpful but indicated that we would require to look at each request individually. I thought that we would wish not to become involved in an investigation which would amount mainly to a staff investigation and perhaps lead to dismissal, but a more general examination of the way that the home is run and methods for improvement may be a more acceptable request. It was agreed that he would write to Miss Jones to ask for CAS help, outlining the problem that he has encountered, and that we would give consideration to this on its merits.²⁰³

²⁰³ NRS ED11/850: *Aberlour Child Care Trust*, Letter from John I Smith (senior advisor) to Miss Bet Jones, dated, 23 February 1979 [SGV.001.006.8668].

Here we see how reluctant the Scottish Office was to become overly involved with the internal problems of voluntary organisations unless they were left with no option.

After [REDACTED] from the Clifton Road Home in 1979 and the consequent removal of children from there, the MP for Aberdeen North called for a full enquiry.²⁰⁴ The Scottish Office deemed this unnecessary.²⁰⁵ Instead, it was decided that CAS would conduct a formal review of childcare practice by Aberlour.²⁰⁶ As part of their review, CAS arranged to visit three of the Trust's ten homes (there had been eleven until Clifton Road was closed in early 1979). Conclusions drawn by CAS through their investigations concluded that:

In the opinion of the advisors there was considerable justification for the concern felt by the officers of the Trust over the behaviour of [REDACTED] and there were strong indications that [REDACTED] particularly had considerable personal problems of [REDACTED] own, which were impinging on [REDACTED] relationship with [REDACTED] and the relationship of [REDACTED] with [REDACTED]. However, the advisers are much less convinced of the justification for removing the children from the care of the couple so suddenly and without any formulated plan for the future care of the children. [...]

The 7 children living at the home had all been living there before [REDACTED] took up [REDACTED] appointment in [REDACTED] indeed 5 of the children had been in the home since it opened [REDACTED] before. [...]

A study of the history of the children concerned since their move indicates not surprisingly that they have all reacted adversely to the experience. Some have manifested emotional disturbance, others have become involved in delinquent acts.²⁰⁷

The CAS report gave little in the way of specific recommendations to the Trust but did give general advice and strongly inferred that Aberlour should review its model

²⁰⁴ [REDACTED] [SGV.001.006.8751-9].

²⁰⁵ See NRS ED11/851: *Voluntary Homes Administration: Aberlour Child Care Trust (Action on Question by Robert Hughes M.P.)*. This file contains miscellaneous items of correspondence and notes of meetings between the Trust and CAS, as well as a report by a TGWU member on the Union's dealings with, and opinions of the Trust, and a number of local authority registration documents for Aberlour homes in different parts of Scotland [SGV.001.006.8821-2, 8832, 8891-2, 8920, 8926, 8957, 8961, 8975-90].

²⁰⁶ NRS ED11/850: *Aberlour Child Care Trust*, [see for example SGV.001.006.8560, 8596 and 8649-50]. Note that CAS did not have a remit to inspect homes following the 1968 Social Work Act—these tailed off after 1970. Instead they acted in an advisory capacity.

²⁰⁷ NRS ED11/851: *Voluntary Homes Administration; Social Work Evaluation of the Aberlour Child Care Trust—draft copy of study dated March 1980* [SGV.001.006.8853-4].

of care.²⁰⁸ Aberlour's specialism was in providing long-term, stable care for children in a residential setting; but by the 1970s there was every indication that this could not continue to be their mode of service provision. Developments in social work since the 1960s saw local authorities make greater strides in the area of prevention, which aimed to keep children with their families wherever possible, and the use of residential care became more restricted to short-term crisis management until children could be returned home. Larger authorities also tried to place children in their own residential facilities rather than in the voluntary sector, and if voluntary homes had to be used, local authorities preferred to use those in their own region. When CAS completed their review in 1979 the advice given to Aberlour took all these factors into account stating that this situation presented:

...some problems to an agency like the Aberlour Trust, which has homes in four of the regions of Scotland. Some voluntary establishments may find that they must change their style of work completely and perhaps offer their resources to another group of clients - for example, the mentally handicapped - for whom there is a great need to develop a variety of provision.

The only concrete development that the Trust has at the present time is with Tayside Region Social Work Department. The Trust has agreed to build a small children's home in Dundee for Tayside children and this is at the planning stage.

The Trust has recognised the need to widen its terms of reference and now operates under a new Educational Endowment Scheme made by the Secretary of State in 1978, under the Education (Scotland) Acts. There is some doubt as to whether this recent change has been sufficiently radical to allow the Trust to experiment and innovate. Nevertheless it does give the Trust an opportunity to rethink how it may use its valuable resources.

[...]

The social work advisers feel that it is appropriate to raise some issues about the role of the Governors in the light of current problems facing all voluntary agencies. In the past, many voluntary agencies have conducted their business through the work of unpaid committee members. This has gradually changed and now most agencies have salaried staff, trained in the particular area of service being provided by the agency. This has led to the need to examine closely the role of the committee member vis- a-vis the paid staff. It is obviously inappropriate for the committee member to retain so much power and authority that staff are unable to function effectively. On the other hand, it seems

²⁰⁸ Ibid., [SGV.001.006.8878].

inappropriate for the committee to be virtually uninvolved in the work of the staff..²⁰⁹

This advice highlights that if organisations such as Aberlour were to survive they had to agree to work with local authorities to supply specialist services where there was an acknowledged need. Aberlour did heed the advice given and established an Advisory Group with the remit of taking Aberlour forward in a process of service diversification.²¹⁰

By 1982 the situation with this process was reported to be as follows:

...most of our existing homes are almost full... Where there is a more specialised role for a home e.g. (disturbed children or adolescents) we are likely to have referrals continuing. In Central and Grampian referrals to ordinary family group homes could well continue. In Strathclyde, however one Home (Hamilton) is closing at the end of March, and we see no prospect of further referrals to our homes in Paisley and Cumbernauld.

Our present policy is therefore -

a) to retain their present role for those homes in Central Region (Braehead and Cornton) and Grampian, (Bridge of Don, Bucksburn, Clifton Road and Keith).

b) to seek alternative roles for -

Dunfermline (handicapped children from Lynnbank Hospital)

Kirkcaldy ("Maladjusted" children)

Paisley (possible Family Centre)

Cumbernauld ("respite" care for handicapped)

Hamilton ("respite" care for handicapped).

In addition we are planning to set up new projects which will be additional to the existing homes, as follows

a) "Independence" projects for young people at Kildean, Stirling, and Scone, Perthshire.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 'Study of the Aberlour Trust' [SGV.001.006.8913-4].

²¹⁰ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 15 December 1981, consulted at Aberlour Headquarters in December 2018.

- b) Family centres at - Langlees, Falkirk
 - Whitfield, Dundee
 - Methil, Fife
- c) Homes for handicapped children needing "respite" care
 - Stirling area
 - Dundee area.²¹¹

Internal Monitoring

There is evidence that members of the governing body visited homes. For example, in 1975:

Mrs. Findlay had made a visit with the Principal to the Bridge of Don home. The Principal said that they had seen a number of the children, and the visit had been quite enjoyable. The Housemother was without assistant staff at the time of the visit but was coping quite well.²¹²

The Aberdeen [REDACTED] who was dismissed by the Trust following the incident at Clifton Road alleged in a letter to her MP (Robert Hughes) that governors claimed to visit homes four times yearly, but in fact rarely visited any of the homes.²¹³ It is impossible to judge what the facts of this matter were, but it would seem evident that an arrangement existed whereby governors were supposed to visit homes.

The report prepared by CAS in 1979 and issued in 1980, however, concluded that internal monitoring was ineffective:

At present the part- time social worker covers the Aberdeen and Keith homes. The full-time social worker based at Stirling covers the 7 homes from Paisley in the west to Kirkcaldy in the east. With the geographical distances involved it seems unlikely that the social worker can give at the moment the degree of support to individual homes that should be available to them. The advisors suggest that the Trust should consider

²¹¹ Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 23 February 1982 [ABE.001.006.6737].

²¹² Aberlour Minute Book, entry dated 6 March 1975 [ABE.001.001.6652].

²¹³ [REDACTED]

[SGV.001.006.8742-3].

its present staffing arrangements and particularly whether an additional post of social worker might be required.²¹⁴

The CAS report also mentioned the difficulties of the social workers' role and that such problems had been identified when these professionals were employed in other such organisations. They encouraged great clarity about the roles of social workers as well as the director and deputy in order to facilitate better levels of support to residential staff.²¹⁵

²¹⁴ NRS ED11/851: Aberlour Child Care Trust; 'Social Work Evaluation of the Aberlour Child Care Trust', [SGV.001.006.8794].

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, [SGV.001.006.8793-4].

Question 4: Placement and Reviews for Children

c.1930-1950

Placements

Reasons for a child being taken into care are recorded on the orphanage admission form in brief terms. More detailed information regarding the circumstances in which a child is taken into care may be recorded in the child's case file, usually in letters between parents or other parties responsible for the child (e.g. Children's Officer, RSSPCC Inspector). These files typically contain an Admission Form for each child (containing sparse details on the child's medical condition, details of parents and their employment if any, and reasons why the child requires out of home care, as well as who was responsible for requesting admission to the orphanage) and other papers such as letters to the Warden from parents or third parties, such as Directors of Public Assistance or of Education in local authorities or the children themselves. For children admitted to the Orphanage in the 1930s, some information is provided on why children were removed from their birth families (usually the death of one or other parent, inability to provide owing to insecure employment), though this is usually brief. There is some suggestion that more detailed information/case histories were provided by Children's Officers, but these are not generally contained within the case files.²¹⁶

There is rarely any significant information provided to explain why a child was admitted to Aberlour in particular. Aberlour did act as a local orphanage for children from its hinterland (i.e. the counties of Aberdeenshire, Moray, and Banffshire) but children were sent there from across Scotland, presumably because it was a large institution and could accommodate children, especially sibling groups. During wartime, Aberlour was likely especially in demand for places given the difficulty of finding women to undertake foster care.²¹⁷ In the case files provided to us there is only one example of Aberlour being identified as suited to a particular child who was described as 'rather backward'. It was felt that the orphanage would provide the child

²¹⁶ See Sample of Aberlour Case Files, 1950s case 3: refers to case histories being sent by Children's Officer for seven children but these are not retained on the file of this child. [ABE.001.009.1580] The case files referred to here are those provided by Aberlour Child Care Trust to SCAI. Five, redacted children's files were provided for each decade between 1930 and 1970.

²¹⁷ See sample of Aberlour Case File, 1940s case 1 for an example of this [ABE.001.009.1025].

with 'practical training'.²¹⁸ In another case it was clear that Aberlour was a placement of last resort after the child had been accused of stealing from her foster guardian.²¹⁹

By the 1950s admission forms still provide brief information on the reasons for a child's admission but case files indicate that more information was sometimes provided to the orphanage from the placing authority (if a local authority) including medical details and progress at school. There is still no justification for placing children in Aberlour in particular.

Reviews

The case files from the 1930s through the 1940s contain no evidence of reviews of children's wellbeing. It must be concluded that within this timeframe formal reviews were not undertaken. In this period also, there is no evidence of reviews of a child being undertaken by experts, e.g. psychologists. On occasion a child's progress was briefly remarked upon in the course of correspondence between the Warden and an external enquiry (for example a parent or local authority official), often in the context of querying whether a child should remain in the orphanage or if a child had got into trouble. For instance, in 1933 the Director of Education in the child's local authority of Keith, wrote to Aberlour's Warden to enquire after the child's work and behaviour in the context of whether the child should be removed from the orphanage.²²⁰ This does not constitute a formal review of the placement or the child.

Reasons for removal

Case files and admission forms provide some basic information on the reasons a child was removed or discharged. Some children were returned to their natural families if circumstances in those families improved. Removal in these cases was generally to return children to parents or other family members at the request of the parents or the Children's Officer. The orphanage made some efforts to find out about the circumstances they were returning to via local Children's Officers. In a case of boys returned to relatives from Aberlour in 1950, the Warden was pleased to go along with the Children's Officer's judgement, '[i]f the grandfather has adequate accommodation for these two boys and...has the right sort of woman to keep house

²¹⁸ Sample of Aberlour case files, 1930s case 2 [ABE.001.009.0919-20].

²¹⁹ Sample of Aberlour case files, 1930s case 4 [ABE.001.009.0952-3].

²²⁰ Sample of Aberlour case files, 1930s case 2 [ABE.001.009.0919].

for him, if the granny is dead, then I agree with you it will be an excellent plan to allow these two boys to make their home with the grandfather.²²¹

Many more remained in the orphanage until they reached school leaving age or were found work, either within the orphanage (the girls as domestics and the boys on the farm or in gardening work) or outside. In a few cases, children who remained in Aberlour until school leaving age were sent into further education.

It is clear from case files that in the 1930s and 1940s (and perhaps particularly during the war) Aberlour was regarded by employers as a source of labour. Case files contain letters from employers and in one instance from the Cromarty Firth State Management District (in 1942—this was a wartime body) requesting boys or girls who were ready to work. In the Cromarty case a letter was sent to the Warden asking, 'if you have any boys who are ready to go out to work and would be suitable for hotel work.'²²² In another case, a hotel owner in Largs had telephoned her local Minister asking if he knew 'of any Church Home where I might get a domestic from.'²²³ She was advised to write to Aberlour and they obliged with a girl who was placed in the hotel as a kitchen maid.

c.1950-1970

Placements

From a review of a sample of case files of children who were resident in the 1950s and 1960s, practice in respect of recording the reasons children were removed from families and placed in Aberlour continued as before. Admission forms remained unchanged, very brief details were recorded of children's backgrounds. Medical reports were provided to the orphanage by the local authority on admission.

By the 1960s, much more detailed information regarding the circumstances in which a child was taken into care may be recorded in the child's case file. This may be in letters between parents or other parties responsible for the child (e.g. Children's Officer, RSSPCC Inspector), but some cases also contain a more formal report by the

²²¹ Sample of Aberlour Case files, 1950s case 2, letter dated 1 August 1950 [ABE.001.009.1425].

²²² Sample of Aberlour Case files, 1930s case 5, letter dated 16 September 1942 [ABE.001.009.0972].

²²³ Sample of Aberlour case files, 1930s, case 4, letter dated 23 September 1940 [ABE.001.009.0949].

local authority childcare officer.²²⁴ Reasons a child was admitted to this institution in particular or justifications for that decision are rarely provided.

Reviews

By the 1960s there had clearly been changes in record keeping at Aberlour as case files do now include a variety of forms of report on children. These include monthly reports (typed) on each child, presumably completed by the houseparent though these are unsigned and may have been completed centrally. These reports contain information on visits to the child, gifts received, summaries of school reports, and any comments on behavioural issues—good and bad—as well as notes of dates of removal to smaller homes in the 1960s and date of discharge. Reports also note absconding, theft, and other forms of ‘misbehaviour’.

These reports, whilst offering brief comments, often provide an indication of a child’s emotional state. One example of this is the case of a child admitted in 1964. This child was, observed ‘rocking in bed while asleep’ in 1965.²²⁵ In 1967 it was noted he had absconded, and in 1968 he was observed bullying younger children.²²⁶ In addition some case files include handwritten notes on children (again unclear as to who produced these but likely a houseparent).²²⁷ These can be rather scrappy and impressionistic though some are somewhat more detailed. In one 1960s case file there is a report of a visit undertaken by the Warden and lady superintendent in 1966 to a child housed at Bucksburn home containing information on the child’s behaviour: ‘sometimes gets into a temper. Has had his bottom smacked and was put to bed’—and his progress with respect to school work and household tasks.²²⁸

Case files give the overriding impression that into the 1960s the Warden’s assessment of children was still influential. For example, in the case of two boys who had absconded and were reported to the police for stealing, the Warden remarked to the Children’s Officer ‘it is evident that these boys will require a considerable period of ordered living if they are eventually to take their place as normal members of society’.²²⁹ When the case went to the sheriff court, the Warden requested the court to take ‘no drastic action’ in a submission that contains comments on the boys

²²⁴ Sample of Aberlour Case Files, 1960s case 2 [ABE.001.009.1839-40].

²²⁵ Case file, 1960s [ABE.001.005.3617].

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, [ABE 001 005 3616-7].

²²⁷ See for example sample of Aberlour case files, 1960s case 1 [ABE.001.009.1820-6].

²²⁸ Sample of Aberlour case files, 1960s case 4, report dated 31 July 1966 [ABE.001.009.1975].

²²⁹ Sample of Aberlour case files, 1960s case 1, letter dated 7 Feb 1962 [ABE.001.009.1793].

emotional adjustment.²³⁰ In this particular case, the Warden did eventually ask the Children's Officer to remove the boys as they were so disruptive, and this did happen.²³¹ The Warden also approved or vetoed children's holidays and stays with friends of Aberlour, though usually after consultation with the relevant Children's Officer.²³²

There is limited evidence in the case files for this period of children being referred to specialists (apart from medical professionals for physical health problems) for emotional difficulties despite frequent references to children causing disturbance and being difficult to handle. One child was referred for psychiatric examination in 1964.²³³

Reasons for removal

In this period the case files indicate that children were removed from the orphanage to return to live with their parents on account of changes in family circumstances, often with regard to housing, remarriage, or changes in employment. The decision was usually indicated by the relevant Children's Officer who made arrangements for the children to be returned.

In an internal memo dated 15 April 1968 the Aberlour Warden informed Mrs Burns of the Dunfermline home that:

All arrangements for children going home, released to parents, guardians or any other person can only be made through headquarters. [...] I had already refused to release [child] on the word of his relatives and had referred the matter to the Department concerned who were dealing with it. They could take us to task quite seriously as they had not given any formal consent.²³⁴

As seen above, some children were moved because of disciplinary issues—that is Aberlour was unable to control their behaviour. In a case of a child whose persistent absconding from a small home in Keith was causing concern the Warden wrote to the child's Children's Officer,

I think this further abscond has now materially changed the position and I think it is imperative that he be placed in an environment where the discipline is much

²³⁰ Ibid., 7 March 1962 [ABE.001.009.1796].

²³¹ Ibid., letter from Warden dated 10 Sept 1962 [ABE.001.009.1805-6].

²³² Case File R. Aitchison 1950s-60s: correspondence on file re holidays [ABE.001.005.3792-4].

²³³ BCR [REDACTED] [ABE.001.005.3604].

²³⁴ BCM [REDACTED] [ABE.001.005.3651].

more exacting than we can provide in the somewhat more permissive atmosphere of a family home.²³⁵

In another example, Aberlour seems completely unable to handle the children's behaviour that was described as 'completely beyond the control of staff in any normal children's home.'²³⁶ These children were removed by the Edinburgh Children's Officer and found places in another institution.

c.1970-1990

Placements

By the 1970s, documentation is much fuller and case files contain information on the reasons children are taken into care, with a brief summary of these reasons recorded on admission forms. It is still unclear as to why Aberlour is chosen for particular children or in any particular home (from the 1970s group homes are in operation).

Reviews

The 1970s sees a sea-change in the level of recording in terms of the quality of reviews of children's progress and wellbeing, and the suitability of the placement. Case files contain ample evidence of regular recording (monthly at least) of significant events and changes in children's lives whilst they are resident at Aberlour (now in small group homes) and also the completion of 'Periodic Progress Reports' by a houseparent. These were annual, quite detailed reports on a child's progress including disposition, social adjustments, interests, attitudes to school, outstanding good qualities and special difficulties.

In addition, all children had a social worker who played a significant role in monitoring progress and managing children's transition from care to the post-care situation (see Question 6: After Care). Progress Review Meetings were held where a child's general progress was reviewed, and recommendations were made regarding the future. It is also evident from case files that Aberlour staff and social workers had recourse to support from other professionals such as educational psychologists if a child was thought to require additional intervention.

²³⁵ Sample of Aberlour case files, 1960s case 2, letter from Warden dated 15 October 1968 [ABE.001.009.1857].

²³⁶ Sample of Aberlour case files, 1960s case 1, letter from Warden dated 10 Sept 1962 [ABE.001.009.1805].

By the 1980s, case files are extensive, containing detailed reports and reviews as above, as well as daily reports on a child's activities in the home. Case file correspondence does now include information about referrals to other professionals, e.g. educational psychologists.²³⁷ Documentation relating to Children's Hearings are included in case files. School reports are included in case files.

Reasons for removal

In this period children were removed to return to their family homes when conditions had improved or they were prepared for independent living. It was the case that decisions to remove children from their families were taken by Social Work Departments and reviewed by the Children's Hearings. Reasons for removing children were recorded on the case file (on the child's record sheet) and for some cases, in the form of a Social Report written by a Social Worker.

²³⁷ Sample of Aberlour case files, 1970s case 3, letter from child's social worker to Dunfermline Home director, 18 May 1972 [ABE.001.009.2223].

Question 6: After Care

c.1930-1950

There were no formal arrangements at Aberlour in this period to assist children leaving the Home when they reached school leaving age.²³⁸ Training of children was the institution's mission and older children due to leave care were placed in specific types of work; this often involved preparatory training delivered within the orphanage and its farm. How long children might have remained in training prior to being sent out to work depended on circumstances, but this could extend to years if jobs could not be found or, quite possibly, their labour was necessary in the orphanage. The Home at Aberlour had its own farm, a poultry farm that employed boys after the age of 15 and a laundry that, in 1937, employed 20 'working girls' who were presumably former (or current) residents at the orphanage.²³⁹

The *Aberlour Orphanage Magazine* provides some further information about aftercare arrangements in this period. In August 1934 it records that:

Of the 58 children who, during the year, left our home, the most have been placed successfully in situations; the girls chiefly in domestic service and the boys in farm work, in the Army and Air Force, as garden boys, or in house service as pantry boys and handymen. The Warden and Staff take much trouble in watching over their first experience in gaining a livelihood.²⁴⁰

In 1936 it was claimed in the *Magazine* that:

Little difficulty is experienced in finding situations for the children on leaving the Orphanage; the value of effective aftercare is fully realised and every endeavour is made to develop this important function of the institution.²⁴¹

In 1939 the *Magazine* reported: '[t]he girls were placed chiefly in domestic service and the boys drafted into one of the Services—the Army, the Navy or the Air Force or

²³⁸ See for example sample of Aberlour case files, 1930s case 1 [ABE.001.009.0907].

²³⁹ Orphanage Magazine (1936) extracted in Aberlour Minute Book 3, p. 349, consulted at Aberlour Headquarters in December 2018.

²⁴⁰ This extract is from a pasted page inserted into a minute book held at the archive of the Aberlour Orphanage; the page is labelled as coming from the magazine issued at this date, consulted at Aberlour Headquarters in December 2018..

²⁴¹ Orphanage Magazine (1936) consulted at Aberlour Headquarters in December 2018.

sent out as garden boys or page boys and in a few cases to farm work.²⁴² This is supported by the testimony of former orphanage children (though the testimony is undated and could refer to a later period):

Prospective employers learned to look to the orphanage as a source of good, cheap labour and to this end we were trained as if our lives depended on it... [...] Girls went into service at hotels as chambermaids or homes as nannies – most of them went to London as cheap labour.²⁴³

Also in 1939, it was remarked in the *Magazine* that:

The Warden, the Lady Superintendent and members of the staff take much trouble in watching over their first experience in working life and in one or two cases have received back into the home boys and girls who were misfits.²⁴⁴

Aberlour leavers were regularly sent to work in hotels and other establishments requiring domestic staff and employers knew to write to the orphanage requesting workers. In 1942, a boy was sent to work in a hotel when, as we have previously noted, the Cromarty Firth State Management District wrote to Aberlour ‘wondering if you have any boys who are ready to go out to work and who would be suitable for hotel work.’²⁴⁵ Local ministers also recommended the Orphanage to prospective employers. For example, in the case of a female child who left Aberlour in 1940, her employer—a hotel in Largs—had enquired of the local minister ‘if he knew of any Church home where I might get a domestic from’. The employer was referred to Aberlour.²⁴⁶

The records we have consulted do not provide substantive information on the destinations of all leavers. Evidence from the children’s case files suggests that children’s destinations upon reaching school leaving age were dependent on the Warden’s assessment of their abilities and temperament, and on what kinds of employers contacted the orphanage. Very few continued in education beyond school leaving age (although figures are not available). In 1937, the Medical Inspector from

²⁴² Orphanage Magazine (1939), extracted in Aberlour Minute Book 3, p. 460, consulted at Aberlour Headquarters in December 2018.

²⁴³ Testimony cited in Speyside High School, *Childhood Days at Aberlour* (1989) [MOC.001.001.0038].

²⁴⁴ Orphanage Magazine (1939), extracted in Aberlour Minute Book 3, p. 460, consulted at Aberlour Headquarters in December 2018.

²⁴⁵ Sample of Aberlour case files, 1930s case 5, letter to Rev. Wolfe dated 16 September 1942 [ABE.001.009.0972].

²⁴⁶ Sample of Aberlour case files, 1930s case 4, letter to Rev. Wolfe dated 23 September 1940 [ABE.001.009.0949].

the Scottish Office Department of Education noted that 'a few selected boys and girls have been given the opportunity of advanced education by attending the secondary department of the school in the village of Aberlour.'²⁴⁷ In 1939, one boy was noted as attending University.²⁴⁸

In 1939 the *Magazine* reported that:

whilst most of the Orphanage girls are trained for domestic service, any who show likelihood of profiting from a Secondary school education are encouraged to do so and so far as possible these girls will be given the chance of training either for teaching or the nursing professions.²⁴⁹

It should be noted here that after the First World War domestic service was a rapidly declining and unpopular destination for girls with the rise in retail and white-collar work; therefore Aberlour was placing girls in an area of employment that was being shunned by girls and women outside the care system.

External benefactors supported a few children. In the case of a group of siblings whose stay at Aberlour was supported by the Hairdressers' Orphan Fund, there is evidence on the children's case file that the fund was willing to pay for vocational training or continuing education when the children reached school leaving age. The Warden's response in the case of one of the boys of this family was that he would liaise with the child's Headmaster and the boy regarding his career ambitions.²⁵⁰

There was no formal system in place to support leavers and to maintain ongoing contact, but in August 1939 the orphanage magazine reported that '[w]ith the children successfully and happily placed in situations care is taken in keeping in touch with these old boys and girls when they have gone out into the world.'²⁵¹ The Warden was the point of contact for former orphanage boys and girls. Case files contain letters written to the Warden with updates on their lives since leaving and sometimes with requests to visit (and in one case identified, a request to return to

²⁴⁷ Aberlour Minute Book 3 (1937), p. 394, consulted at Aberlour Headquarters in December 2018.

²⁴⁸ Orphanage Magazine (August 1939), extracted from Aberlour Minute Book 3, p. 460, consulted at Aberlour Headquarters in December 2018..

²⁴⁹ Orphanage Magazine (1939) extracted in Aberlour Minute Book 3, p. 460, consulted at Aberlour Headquarters in December 2018.

²⁵⁰ Sample of Aberlour case files, 1940s case 2 [ABE.001.009.1098-9].

²⁵¹ Orphanage Magazine, 1939 extracted in Aberlour Minute Book 3, p. 460, consulted at Aberlour Headquarters in December 2018.

the orphanage to work). In this period this contact was on an ad hoc basis and depended on children keeping in touch with the orphanage rather than vice versa.

There is evidence that for some children the transition to life outside the homes was difficult, with some asking to return to the orphanage after sometime in employment outwith the institution.²⁵² In the 1930s there was consideration given to erecting a separate hostel for old boys who returned to the orphanage on holiday or on sick leave. However, it was not until 1960 that a dedicated aftercare hostel was established in Aberdeen.²⁵³ Financial limitations meant that provision of this type in this period was impossible.

c.1950-1970

In this period there still was no aftercare section or service at Aberlour. The Warden was still key to children's destinations. Children's post-care destinations at school leaving age were still dependent on the relationships the Warden had with employers, as well as the level of education on offer to orphanage children and the expectations of orphanage staff for the children. The Warden (and on occasion other orphanage staff) was still a point of contact between leavers and prospective employers evidenced by correspondence on children's case files concerning requests for staff from employers, responses to those requests, as well as recommendations on training with the armed forces.²⁵⁴

In 1952 the orphanage Management Committee did discuss the issue of the school leaving age for girls and queried how long they could keep them at the orphanage or whether they should stay on at school.²⁵⁵ This suggests the orphanage itself was still somewhat dependent on the domestic work of older girls. In 1953, three girls were placed on a business training course at Webster's College, Aberdeen, and another moved to the pre-nursing College in Aberdeen.²⁵⁶

Evidence from children's case files indicates that some Children's Officers corresponded with the orphanage regarding children's destinations when they reached school leaving age. In one case of a boy who was due to leave in 1961 his Children's Officer in Kilmarnock wrote to the Warden asking if he thought the boy

²⁵² Sample of Aberlour case files, 1930s case 3 [ABE.001.009.0932].

²⁵³ Aberlour Minute Book 3 (1937), p. 378, consulted at Aberlour Headquarters in December 2018.

²⁵⁴ For example, sample of Aberlour case files, 1950s case 2, letter dated 21 April 1954 re application of boy to Leith Nautical College for cadet training [ABE.001.009.1486].

²⁵⁵ Orphanage Minute Book 6: 27 March 1952 pp. 74-5 [ABE.001.006.6572].

²⁵⁶ Ibid. [ABE.001.006.6572].

had the capability to sit an examination in order to be accepted on a pre-apprenticeship course. The Warden replied that this boy was

...a very indeterminate lad who seems to have little positive interest in what the future may hold for him. His latest idea is that he should return home to join [XX] in, I think, a lemonade bottling establishment. I greatly doubt he would stick to an apprenticeship with its low money, when other boys of his age, as labourers, would be getting higher pay.²⁵⁷

Whilst there are no statistics providing information on education levels of orphanage children, by the 1950s Management Committee minutes make reference to the facilitation of boys attending Keith Grammar School—Aberlour was addressing the provision of travel and board.²⁵⁸ In 1960, reference was made in the minutes to the support being given to two children who had failed their university exams. The Warden 'had taken [child 1] back into the orphanage temporarily and had given him facilities to study and had offered to do the same for [child 2]' so they could take their resits in September.²⁵⁹ These would have been exceptions to the rule.

In 1951, the *Magazine* reported that the Old Boys Hostel in the grounds of the orphanage had space for ten old boys whilst space was available in the girls' wing for returning girls. 'Never a week passes but what we have one or two Old Boys or Girls spending a night or two with us.'²⁶⁰

In 1960 an aftercare hostel was established in Aberdeen for boys over 15 years of age staffed by resident houseparents.²⁶¹ It was designed to aid boys' transition to training and work; the orphanage still controlled the post-care destinations of school leavers. In an interview about his experiences at Aberlour in the 1950s and 60s, one former resident described his own post-care trajectory:

And if you excelled, basically when you left school, because the headmaster Tommy Robertson - you probably heard about him - he was actually a landowner, I think he was from the farming stock, he encouraged kids when they left school, especially the girls they used to go into the hotel trade or cookery or whatever and the boys were either to join the army or er, what was the other

²⁵⁷ Sample of Aberlour case files, 1950s case 5, letter from the Warden, letter 3 March 1961 [ABE.001.009.1728].

²⁵⁸ Orphanage Minute Book 6: 1951, p. 53, consulted at Aberlour Headquarters in December 2018.

²⁵⁹ Orphanage Minute Book 6: 1960, p. 225 consulted at Aberlour Headquarters in December 2018.

²⁶⁰ Orphanage Magazine, 1951, p. 12, consulted at Aberlour Headquarters in December 2018.

²⁶¹ Orphanage Minute Book 6: 17 Nov 1960, p. 287, consulted at Aberlour Headquarters in December 2018.

thing they went into, join the army or go into farming, farm service, er but most of my family, my brothers, all joined the forces and my sister she went to Aberdeen to be a chef, cooking for an old folks home. I just didn't want to join the army, had enough of...

LA: So was it quite difficult to do something else if people were being channelled into these things

Yes it was actually, when I came (...) it was the time they were sort of, there was a home in Aberdeen at that time in Constitution street which was for kids that were sort of brighter and they would go in there and serve their time and go to college or whatever but I went there, and because I - I can't remember I didn't get my grades, I really wanted to serve my time and do something, I wanted to be a painter, cos I do a lot of art and drawing anyway and er, they wouldn't let me so I actually landed up working in a shop and I actually (...) I went round various paint stores in Aberdeen to try and get them to take me on as an apprentice painter but er word got round and I got a wee bit of a telling off for doing it, as it was I didn't get to serve my time.

LA: So what did you do then?

Well I went into shop work, I started work in a shop, it was a er, what do you call it, a hardware store and that was quite good.²⁶²

Of importance to note here is that while case files are the best source for identifying children's destinations after leaving care, not all case files contain this information.

The Warden was the consistent point of contact for old boys and girls and the Magazine regularly published letters from former children. The Warden was also asked by old boys and girls to provide references for prospective employers, though these were not always complimentary. In one case of a boy who stayed at the orphanage for a short time in the 1950s and who requested a reference two years later, the Warden responded in a letter that stated:

You have the brains but I regret to say that, so far as I could see, you made no effort to overcome defects in character...You should know that you left behind a

²⁶² Interview with former Aberlour child conducted in 1997 by Lynn Abrams This was conducted as part of an academic research project on the history of child welfare in Scotland. The findings were published as L.Abrams, *The Orphan Country: Children of Scotland's Broken Homes, 1800-Present Day* (1998). The interviewee gave permission for material to be used for research purposes beyond the initial project.

very unsavoury reputation for furtiveness and particularly for unseemly behaviour with the opposite sex.²⁶³

The Warden refused to provide the reference in this case. In another case however, in 1965, a more positive reference was provided for a boy considered for an office junior position at the BBC.²⁶⁴

There is evidence that he acted in a *loco parentis* role in respect of those children who were moving into employment or further education. For example, in the 1960s the training officer of HMS Raleigh, which had taken a boy, corresponded with the Warden in respect of the boy's progress.²⁶⁵ In another case of a girl who moved from the orphanage to pre-nursing college in Aberdeen in 1958, the Warden informed the relevant children's department of this fact and asked the department's view on whether the girl should be permitted to stay for a weekend with a girl on the same course. 'You will appreciate that we have to be careful to make adequate investigation before allowing any girl in our care to stay in any home unknown to us.' The girl's home was subsequently investigated, and permission given. The Warden was of the view that the girl would want to maintain close contact with the orphanage and 'we for our part are willing to encourage her in every way to keep close contact with us.'²⁶⁶

c.1970-1990

By this period there was much greater attention being given to children's transition from care to independent living, largely on account of the closure of the orphanage and the setting up of smaller group homes, and the engagement of social workers with children's progress to post-care.

By the 1970s and 80s the organisation, along with children's social workers, made more strenuous efforts to manage the transition of children leaving care. Case files indicate that social workers and others responsible for children's care and progress

²⁶³ Sample of Aberlour case files, 1950s case 2, letter from the Warden dated 15 April 1955 [ABE.001.009.1488].

²⁶⁴ Aberlour case file: Aitchison 1960s, letter dated 28 Jan 1965 [ABE.001.005.3827]

²⁶⁵ [REDACTED] BCR [REDACTED]
1968 [ABE.001.008.8756-8].

²⁶⁶ Sample of Aberlour Case files, 1950s case 1, letters between Warden and West Lothian Children's Officer, 12 September 1958 [ABE.001.009.1348].

did discuss with children their plans for the future at formal reviews.²⁶⁷ Leavers were helped to find employment and were supported during this transition to the workplace when often they remained in residence within in the group home. The case file of a girl leaver in the late 1970s illustrates some of the difficulties facing care leavers and her care workers. The regular report completed by her houseparent or social worker shows how the houseparent took her along to a local hotel 'to see about a job' when she left school. Subsequently the report details frequent job changes, mostly precipitated by the girl herself.²⁶⁸

Some leavers were provided with accommodation in hostels or lodgings once they left the group homes. In the 1980s, the Trust discussed establishing hostels specifically designed for adolescents leaving care; in 1982 they planned to set up 'independence projects' for young people in Stirling and in Perth.²⁶⁹

Social workers also supported other aspects of children's transition to independent living, such as referring girls still under the age of 18 to Family Planning clinics for advice about contraception.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁷ For example: Aberlour Case Files, October 1982: 'His progress at school was discussed with him, and also his plans for the future...[child] said he hoped to go to Moray College.' [ABE.001.001.1622].

²⁶⁸ Sample of Aberlour case files, 1970s case 3 [ABE.001.009.2091].

²⁶⁹ Director's Report for the Meeting of the Board of Governors, 1982 Appendix II.

²⁷⁰ Sample of Aberlour Case files, 1970s case 3 [ABE.001.009.2087].