

APPENDIX

Part B - Current Statement

3. Retrospective Acknowledgement/Admission

3.1 Acknowledgement of Abuse

- a) **Does the organisation accept that between 1930 and 17 December 2014 any children cared for in foster care were abused?**

In order to answer this question, we used the following sources:

1. The database we hold of all historic abuse cases that have been brought to our attention via access to records, civil claims, historic abuse allegations and so on
2. The current recording system for fostering (CHARMS) that flags all records where an allegation of abuse is made
3. The Safeguarding Incident Form (internal escalation system) database that has been reliably in place for over ten years
4. A collection of "Serious Incident Forms" in a box of material stored in our Archives.

We have been able to establish that we know 21 children have made allegations of abuse or been the victim in allegations made by others while in Barnardo's Foster Care. The cases are set out in Appendix 1, which includes the process and outcome of investigations. The detail explains that one of these children was not technically a foster child, but his "placement" with his step-father and his step-father's partner (the perpetrator) was supervised by Barnardo's as a foster placement therefore has been included in the figures.

While this is clearly a low number given our estimated 2,656 children fostered in Scotland from the 1940s to the present day, any abuse is clearly not acceptable. Therefore, we conclude that some children were abused in Barnardo's provided foster care.

- b) **If so, what is the organisation's assessment of the extent and scale of such abuse?**

As we have stated above, 21 children have been the subject of allegations of abuse against them, at least some of which were either proven or are likely. We are not naïve to the possibility that there may be further children who were abused who have never come forward, but we are as confident as we can be that this was not widespread.

This does not include care that would be viewed as harsh or sub-standard by modern standards, but which may have been acceptable at the time, nor possible emotional harm that stemmed from common practices around: decisions regarding contact between children in foster care and their birth families (though this was generally encouraged); physical chastisement; and the less respectful view of children that prevailed at the time. We also recognise that we, along with other

contemporary organisations, may have historically misinterpreted the acting out of childhood trauma as “naughtiness” or “bad behaviour” that may then have led to a sanction or punishment.

c) What is the basis of that assessment?

Our assessment is based on the number of children who have either reported abuse at the time it occurred, who came forward subsequently to make allegations of non-recent abuse or were the subject of allegations by others.

Many of the children who came into Barnardo’s foster care will have experienced abuse before they came into our care. As they were taken into care to protect them from that abuse, it is tragic that some of them went on to experience abuse in our care.

3.2 Acknowledgement of Systemic Failures

a) Does the organisation accept that its systems failed to protect children in foster care between 1930 and 17 December 2014 from abuse?

With reference to what was known at the time and on review of the allegations of which we are aware, there is no pattern or underlying theme which would identify a systemic failure. While reiterating the point above that any instance of abuse is not acceptable, we do not accept that our systems failed to protect children. The small number of reported abuse cases would tend to suggest that our recruitment, selection, preparation and ongoing supervision of foster carers was in the main successful.

b) What is the organisation's assessment of the extent of any such systemic failures?

We have not concluded that there were systemic failures.

c) What is the basis of that assessment?

As stated above, the number of children making allegations and our review of contemporaneous records has formed the basis of our assessment..

d) What is the organisation's explanation for any such failures?

We have not concluded that there were systemic failures.

3.3 Acknowledgement of Failures/Deficiencies in Response

a) Does the organisation accept that there were any failures and/or deficiencies in its response to abuse, and allegations of abuse, of children in foster care between 1930 and 17 December 2014?

As we have said there have been low numbers to date. It is possible that our

approach historically, in common with other agencies and organisations, was not as open to the possibility of abuse as we are today. However, we have found little evidence of significant deficiencies in either our attempts to safeguard against abuse or in terms of our response to abuse reported. We have found in our review of the known cases, that matters were in the vast majority of cases brought to the attention of statutory bodies such as the local authority and/or the Police and that the matters were subject to investigation. While we would always wish to continue to improve our response to allegations and the table at Appendix 1 demonstrates that we do not always have complete records as to how allegations were responded to, we feel we now have a strong process of responding to allegations that is underpinned by an openness to accept that abuse occurred, involve the Police and other statutory bodies as appropriate and offer a sincere apology.

b) What is the organisation's assessment of the extent of any such systemic failures?

Other than the point we have outlined above around the possibility of misinterpreted childhood trauma, we do not consider there was significant failure or shortcomings in our response.

c) What is the basis of that assessment?

Our research has not revealed significant failures, indeed the records speak of an organisation that is open to on-going learning and improving from abuse cases as opposed to failing to respond.

d) What is the organisation's explanation for any such failures/deficiencies?

We have not discovered significant failures or deficiencies.

3.4 Changes

a) To what extent has the organisation implemented changes to its policies, procedures and practices as a result of any acknowledgment in relation to 3.1 - 3.3 above?

Policy, procedure and practice have always evolved and is based on learning and events. Therefore, there is always a degree to which the processes of the Organisation will be informed from things that have not gone well.

Barnardo's has a specific policy and procedures for dealing with both current and historic abuse. This includes engagement at an early stage with the relevant statutory bodies such as local authorities and the Police and offering full cooperation with any investigations into allegations. The organisation takes every allegation very seriously and ensures that all matters are thoroughly investigated. In terms of historical matters, when adults come forward and report abuse suffered as children in our care we stand ready to offer apologies for the harm suffered and also have procedures of working with our insurers around appropriate redress. We have also in recent years invested heavily in moving the organisation to be more trauma-

informed and this investment has included offering training to staff engaged in fostering. While this is not as a direct result of the possible misinterpretation referenced in 3.1 b) above, such training should make for a more informed interpretation and response to children's behaviour, presentation, words and actions, particularly where they may be indicative of abuse or harm.