



**CHILDREN & FAMILIES and JUSTICE
SERVICES SOCIAL WORK**

Tracy Stephen
Chief Social Work Officer/Head of Service
Moray Council
Elgin Moray IV30 1BX
Telephone: [REDACTED]

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry
[REDACTED]

email: [REDACTED]

Website: www.moray.gov.uk

Your reference:

Our reference: TS/HL

Friday 13th January 2023

Dear Lady Smith

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the evidence led in the inquiry related to foster care in Moray.

We have followed the transcripts and evidence led across the Inquiry and feel deep regret that people have recounted some harrowing stories of their time in foster care, including individuals who were in foster care in Moray.

We recognise the lifelong impact that experiencing abuse can have on people and we are sorry to hear the detail of the two former children in care who led evidence of their experiences in Moray.

We acknowledge that in our original submission in response to the Section 21 Notice date 27-08-19 we stated that incidents of abuse were isolated and sporadic. We do accept that we do not wholly know the extent to which abuse has taken place in Moray and that for the witnesses who led evidence, we had not identified 'Jenny' as part of our original submission. We accept that there may be other people who have experienced abuse in Moray that we do not know about.

We read the file of 'Jenny' as part of our information gathering to enable us to respond to the Section 21 Notice dated 27-08-19 but did not know or understand her experience as she has recounted it at the Inquiry. We regret that this was her experience and hope that that the opportunity to provide evidence has been helpful for her and allowed her to tell her story.

In hearing the witness statement of 'Jenny' she rightly points out how important matching is, understanding the impacts of trauma and the skill match of foster carers to nurture and

support children and young people. Thereafter, we recognise the need for specialised ongoing support to carers and children and young people living with them.

We read the file of 'Mike' as part of our information gathering to enable us to respond to the Section 21 Notice dated 27-08-19 and we were also aware of his account of what he experienced prior to his evidence being given at the Inquiry, as 'Mike' had made contact with Moray Council prior to this. We financially supported 'Mike' to access counselling in 2017 as we considered he was experiencing trauma at that time. We were unable to confirm his account of events from his records. We also knew that 'Christine' did not agree with his account of what happened. Her evidence to the inquiry reiterated this. We regret that 'Mike' has experienced his time in foster care in the way he stated in his evidence to the Inquiry and hope that for him, too, the opportunity to tell his story has been helpful to his healing.

We have learned lessons through the process of gathering and submitting information to the Inquiry related to the Moray context and have made changes to our practice as a result, and, we also recognise that changes to national policy and legislation support those ongoing efforts.

A key learning point for Moray, centred on the witness statements and their file reads, is the account of abuse perpetrated by the children of foster carers and the importance of considering all areas of risk. Furthermore, we have learned lessons about the need to prioritise the relationships between brothers and sisters and ensure these are not resource led decisions, nor should they be dictated by foster carers or professionals, but robustly assessed and supported as far as possible. Where children cannot remain together, we are committed to supporting their lifelong relationships.

The file reads also taught us, that often there are early indicators to potential breakdowns or incidents. We have needed to be more finely tuned into early indicators of relationship breakdowns. We all hopefully now fully recognise, the need to hear, believe and value what children and young people tell us about their experiences in care, ensuring we give them opportunity to tell us.

In Moray today, we set a standard that we share life stories and photographs with children and endeavour to protect and nurture the relationship with parents to ensure that they too are lifelong.

We also recognise the damaging effect that multiple placements can have on children and young people and felt that 'Mike's' articulation of not knowing who his mum was highlighted the impact of this really clearly.

We do recognise also that the practice and language used in files going back many years is not how we would practice today. We want to offer anyone who has had a harmful experience in foster care in Moray the opportunity to be supported further with their care stories in an attempt to support emotional reparation.

Moray Council is committed to providing a trauma informed, nurturing foster care to children and young people and we are grateful for the opportunity to learn both from our

own investigation but also the Inquiry findings. We will continue to assist the Inquiry in any way we can going forward.

Yours sincerely



Tracy Stephen
Chief Social Work Officer/Head of Service

Copies to:

