

8th December The Glasgow Herald

John Swinney apologises to abuse survivors for slow response as redress scheme opens



By [David Bol @mrdavidbol](#) Political Correspondent



Deputy First Minister John Swinney

[10 comments](#)

JOHN Swinney has apologised “unreservedly” on behalf of the Scottish Government for a failure to “respond more appropriately and sooner to the concerns” of survivors of historical child abuse.

The Deputy First Minister made the apology as applications for financial redress for survivors were opened as he confirmed contributions from councils “will essentially be a top slice” of their annual budget from the Scottish Government over a number of years.

Those eligible can apply to request an apology and redress payments ranging from £10,000 up to £100,000. The process has been shaped by the views of survivors and will be delivered by the Scottish Government and Redress **Scotland**.

Mr Swinney said: “Across Parliament, we have come together to confront the scale and horror of the abuse Scotland’s most vulnerable children suffered. We cannot make up for that pain, and we cannot take away the devastating impact it has had on people’s lives. But we can provide acknowledgement and tangible recognition of the harm caused, by offering redress to survivors through this scheme.

“I invite all survivors who are eligible for the scheme to apply, if it is the right choice for them. There is funding for independent legal advice to help survivors make that choice and support is available at every **stage** of the application process.

“There has been a strong survivor voice throughout the process of designing and developing the scheme and I want to thank all survivors who have contributed their time, commitment and insight. Their input has been crucial.”

Saying sorry to survivors for a slow response to their concerns, Mr Swinney added: “We accept the steps taken by government to respond to survivors between 2002 and 2014, a period which spanned different administrations happened too slowly and did not go far enough.

“During that period, a significant number of survivors of childhood abuse in kids in Scotland died.

“Today, the Scottish Government apologises unreservedly, that it did not respond more appropriately and sooner to the concerns of survivors of abuse in care who called for a public inquiry.

“We apologise to the families of those survivors who died before the inquiry began its work and before the redress scheme opened.”

Redress Scotland chairman, Johnny Gwynne, said: “This is an important day in the lives of survivors for whom this scheme is intended, and a milestone in Scotland’s journey to addressing some of the deeply troubling incidents in its past.

“The Redress Scotland team and panel members consider it a privilege to be able to undertake this significant work.

“We stand ready to receive and make decisions on applications for redress.”

Conservative justice spokesperson, Jamie Greene, gave the redress scheme his “absolute support”.

He said: “There is much to welcome in the statement which I think reflects the calls and asks of the survivor community – next of kin payments, funding independent legal advice, the promise of the survivors forum and a commitment to those underlying principles of dignity, respect and compassion but more importantly, a reiteration of the apology, one which I add the voice of these benches to as well.”

Mr Greene asked the Deputy First Minister if any forecasting had taken place into how much funding would need to be available by the Scottish Government, which is underwriting the majority of the low band payments.

He also pressed Mr Swinney over which organisations have “shamefully refused to participate” and what talks have been held with councils so they can “meaningfully participate” in the redress scheme “without jeopardising their ability to provide vital services to young people today in our communities”.

Mr Swinney said the Government still only had “rough estimates” for how much would need to be underwritten.

He added: “We will pursue contributions from organisations, but the Government expects to make a substantial financial contribution over a number of years to the scheme.

“In relation to the contributions achieved to date, over £115 million pounds has been collected to the scheme, £100 million of which is coming from Scottish local authorities

and I welcome the contribution that local authorities are prepared to make to the scheme.”

Turning to the pressures the redress scheme could put onto already stretched councils, Mr Swinney said that “local authorities have been very constructive about this issue in their discussions”.

He added: “We have come to an agreement that the local authority contribution will essentially be a top slice from the Government's contribution to local authority funding over a number of years to spread that burden appropriately.”