

Dr Jim Johnston
Clerk
Public Petitions Committee
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

24 September 2004

Dear Dr Johnston

Support of Petition Number 535

I understand that the Public Petitions Committee will be meeting on Wednesday 29th September and that the Minister for Education and Young People, Peter Peacock M.S.P., will address the committee with reference to the above petition.

Following a request from a constituent, I have been in contact with Peter Peacock previously regarding the issue of an inquiry and would be grateful if this letter of support could be made available to the committee members.

The focus of my correspondence with Peter Peacock M.S.P. was on the abuse which took place in Quarriers and I suggested to him that there may be similarities to be drawn between that case and that of the abuse case at Scottish Borders Council.

I requested that the Social Work Services Inspectorate carry out an inspection of the services provided to the residents of Quarriers over the years that the abuse took place.

I accepted that the present management of Quarriers had co-operated with the police in their inquiries and that they may not have been present at the time of the incidences of abuse. However, I believe that the organisation must take some responsibility for the events which took place and that it is unlikely to do so until an independent investigation can show that there was a dereliction of duty on the part of Quarriers management at the time of the abuse.

Those who suffered abuse at Quarriers were let down by those in charge at the time and now feel that the government has let them down by not looking beyond the actual acts of abuse to the culture which allowed it to happen.

Whether/

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Whether an inquiry uncovers negligence or not, it will show those who suffered that the government cares enough to pursue the issue to its end.

The issues I raise regarding the Quarriers case are relevant to this petition. Court trials and convictions show that abuse has taken place against children who were in the care of the State under the supervision of religious orders. An inquiry is needed to discover why the culture at these institutions allowed this to happen. Until we know where the failures in the system lie, it will be difficult to ensure that the same failures do not happen again.

I appreciate that there are survivors of abuse who would not welcome an inquiry due to the trauma this could cause them. However, we must also consider those who do wish an inquiry. I am sure we could find a solution that would suit everyone, especially if survivors were included in discussions about the best way forward.

Peter Peacock is concerned about the public reaction to an inquiry and indicated to me his concern that an inquiry might have an impact on public confidence. The public already know that abuse took place because of the court trials which have been covered in the media. With more trials still to take place, public confidence will not fully return until a proper investigation has taken place into why it was allowed to happen.

Yours sincerely

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