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Scottish children 'physically, emotionally and sexually abused' while in care



By [Victoria Weldon](#)

Children looked after by three Scottish care providers suffered widespread physical, sexual and emotional abuse in "harsh" regimes which "facilitated sexual predators", an inquiry has found.

The third phase of the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry found that youngsters in institutions run by Quarriers, Aberlour and Barnardo's (QAB) suffered extreme cruelty, including being beaten with bats, force fed, having soap shoved in their mouths and being forced to stand alone in the dark in freezing outbuildings.

Many also suffered serious sexual abuse at the hands of so-called "house parents" and care staff, as well as others outwith the homes, some of whom have since been prosecuted.

The charities have all apologised for the abuse suffered, with inquiry chair Lady Smith **saying that Quarriers offered a "particularly frank and clear apology"**.

In her findings, Lady Smith said: "The establishments of Quarriers, Aberlour, and Barnardo's in **Scotland** were, for many children, places where they felt isolated, afraid, vulnerable, and abused.

"They were physically abused, emotionally abused, and sexually abused in harsh, rigid regimes. Scant regard was paid to their dignity."

She said that the children who came into the care of the charities had already suffered serious trauma, but instead of receiving help, "further damage was inflicted upon them".

The inquiry found that the "undue autonomy" afforded to those in charge of the children and the lack of consistent practices in the homes were major factors in the abuse.

It also noted that, compared to previous organisations investigated by the inquiry - including the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul and the Sisters of Nazareth - **the extent of sexual abuse was greater at the QAB charities.**

Lady Smith added: "Children were subject to regimes, structures, and practices that facilitated the engagement by sexual predators in grooming practices and in serious breaches of trust."

David Whelan, spokesman for Former Boys and Girls Abused in Quarriers (FBGA), thanked the chairwoman for how the inquiry has been handled and said her findings "vindicate" their campaign for a public investigation.

He said former management of Quarriers had failed in their duty of care but accepted the organisation was now "very different".

Mr Whelan added: "Lady Smith's findings are unequivocal in their condemnation of the past Quarriers organisation and the effects of this abuse and its impact on those who suffered such abuse in Quarriers past care

"The extent and nature of the abuse which Lady Smith has found to have occurred in Quarriers is truly shocking."

Alice Harper, chief executive of Quarriers, said: "We repeat our unreserved apology to those who suffered abuse while in our care and acknowledge that children were subjected to physical, sexual and emotional abuse.

"The inquiry allowed us to meet with a number of former residents. This helped us to learn that abuse impacts each person differently and that this requires an individualised approach.

"We understand it may be difficult for former residents and survivors to make contact and our door remains open for anyone who wishes to speak to us and share their experiences, both good and bad."

Aberlour chief executive SallyAnn Kelly welcomed the findings and offered an "unreserved apology to those who suffered abuse".

And Martin Crewe, director of Barnardo's Scotland, also apologised and said it was a "matter of deep regret".

The inquiry is now in its fifth phase and is examining the alleged abuse of children who were sent to other countries.

Lady Smith will consider the findings of all phases before issuing final recommendations at a later date.