

Exclusive: SNP Government 'slams door' in the face of child sex abuse survivors

Campaigner Dave Sharp hits out after his meeting was cancelled at the last minute, saying the lack of urgency is "killing our survivors".

BY Tasha Hall Trainee Reporter; 17:15, 15 NOV 2021

A furious campaigner has accused the Scottish Government of "shutting the door" in the face of historic **child sex abuse** survivors after an appointment was cancelled at the last minute.

Dave Sharp had arranged to meet with **Holyrood**'s new redress management team on Thursday, November 11 in a bid to push forward an awareness campaign for people who are eligible for compensation.

However, he said the meeting was cancelled without explanation, leaving him feeling let down and as though he was being led into a "trap door".

The Scot, who suffered repeated **attacks** by priests at the former St Ninian's School in Falkland, Fife, during the 1970s, has been campaigning for greater help and support for more than 20 years.

Speaking exclusively to the **Scottish Daily Express**, he said: "One minute they (the Scottish Government) are desperate to meet me, then the next minute because I am talking about raising awareness they cancel the meetings - why's that?"

"I was told by the board they would be happy to work with us to do this and get on national television and then all of a sudden after I wrote on my Twitter that I was looking forward to the meeting to discuss raising awareness I get an email ten minutes later to say it has been cancelled.

"It has taken so much to come forward and give everything you have, only to be let down again and have the door shut in your face."

Mr Sharp believes there could be as many as 100,000 survivors out there and is calling for a 'national conversation' about the traumatic issue of childhood sex abuse before it is too late.

The 63-year-old said the lack of urgency from the Scottish Government and other charitable bodies in tackling the issue is "killing our survivors".

He added that setbacks, even minor ones, can trigger survivors to relapse back into addiction and suicidal thoughts.

Mr Sharp said he is treated with more respect in countries such as Australia and Canada but in **Scotland** he feels as though he is treated like a "criminal piece of trash" for his efforts.

Redress Scotland - a Scottish Government body set up by Deputy First Minister **John Swinney** earlier this year - is an expert panel of specialists that will make decisions on applications from survivors seeking financial compensation.

Mr Sharp said: "The only reason the Scottish Government has got away with this is because nobody speaks out everyone is too terrified to open their mouths and the same thing is going to happen with the redress scheme.

"I have truth on my side and that is why everyone is so scared, wondering what is going to come out next."

The redress scheme is also linked to the Scottish historic child abuse public inquiry, which was announced in 2014 and is still slowly grinding through its hearings with no end date in sight.

Among the topics Mr Sharp was planning to raise was the question of why there is no 24-hour helpline available for rape survivors, with Rape Crisis Scotland operating only five days a week from 6pm to midnight.

He said: "Scotland is the only country in Europe that does not have a 24hr helpline for rape survivors."

Mr Sharp was abused for years during his childhood, and even trafficked between Scotland and Ireland where he was subject to horrific sexual abuse.

His campaign, S.A.F.E. (Seek And Find Everyone abused in childhood), will take to the streets across the country as soon as Redress Scotland board publish application forms.

He plans to print 5,000 copies out of the campaign's own funds for survivors who he says 'have no idea the scheme exists' due to lack He added: "We must press pause and have this national conversation - I am not Scotland's number one child abuse sex campaigner, I am the only one.

"No one else does what I do, as soon as you come forward in Scotland someone will try and trip you up and the government did everything they could to stop people campaigning like myself.

"If you are high profile or if you come forward and want to talk about paedophile rings you will be shut down, the Government will cherry-pick.

"There is currently no light at the end of the tunnel for these people, we are not going to get the chance again, if we do not do it now our children are going to suffer."

A Scottish Government spokesperson said: "The statutory Redress scheme will open before the end of the year, in line with the Deputy First Minister's commitments in the Scottish Parliament.

"The current Advance Payment scheme, for survivors aged 68 and over, and terminally ill survivors, will only close to new applications when the new scheme opens.

"Material to promote the scheme will be available at launch, both directly with survivors and via organisations who we know have contacts with survivors.

"These awareness raising measures will certainly continue into 2022, and will be further developed on the basis of the early experience of the scheme.

"Redress Scotland and the Scottish Government will continue to work with survivors on Scotland's redress scheme. There have been regular meetings and discussions with survivors to ensure Scotland's redress scheme is trauma informed and that survivors are treated with dignity, respect and compassion."

** If you are a victim of sex abuse, you can find help and support from Rape Crisis Scotland [here](#).*