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Abuse inquiry is told care home hired staff with Christian values

“They had to have Christian values and a love of and interest in children”

BRIAN DONNELLY

Seven house mothers and fathers – those looking after the children – were convicted of physical and sexual abuse after 2000 for crimes against 23 children between 1955 to 1981.

Eighteen females and five males were targeted in that catalogue of abuse.

An empty logbook of a kind used between and 1958 and 1988 which required details of punishments given to children was given to the inquiry but none was available from this entire period. No records of inspections were available.

James Peoples QC, inquiry senior counsel, said: “Is there any evidence that the organisation at any stage took an organisational decision to not retain those records, this particular form of records, like logbooks and punishment books?”

She said: “We have not been able to find any evidence that there has been an instruction to destroy the records.”

Mr Peoples outlined the description in the standing orders at one point of “the objectionable habits of children who are bed wetters and soiling their bed and wearing apparel are very difficult to cure.

“The utmost sympathy is felt for the house mothers who have to deal with the consequent inconvenience”.

The rules add: “In dealing with such cases house fathers and house mothers should consider how they would handle the same condition if the children were their own.

The inquiry heard that concern was raised by the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, a donor and a visitor over concern over "thrashings" as far back as 1937, but there is no record of any action.

Children were expected to bow or salute to their superiors, the inquiry heard.

The inquiry heard there was evidence pointing to children being punished for wetting the bed and being locked in cupboards, while the organisation's rules outline how many times to strike a child whether on the hands for a girl or both hands and posterior through normal clothing for a boy – up to eight times with a strap for a boy over 14 at one stage.

In a letter, a Quarriers official called James Kelly wrote to all to house parents about "thrashings".

He wrote, in 1937: "Severe thrashing not only makes nervous wrecks of some boys, it hardens others and produces defiance rather than penitence."

He added: "Thrashing is loathsome and unnecessary."

Mr Peoples suggested to Ms Harper that it showed there was concern about corporal punishment. Ms Harper replied: "Yes."

It was also claimed children were often not believed.

The inquiry continues.