

Too much focus on preventing harm from strangers, childcare boss tells inquiry

Witnesses have told the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry of abuse from staff at Quarriers village in Inverclyde.

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A childcare boss has told an abuse inquiry that too much emphasis was placed on preventing harm from strangers, rather than those youngsters knew.

Charles Coggrave told the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry that children are more at risk from people who have regular contact with them, particularly when it comes to sexual abuse.

The head of safeguarding and aftercare for Quarriers also agreed the charity's former village model created an environment which made it easier for them to be preyed upon.

Mr Coggrave said: "When I was a child, my mum and dad would warn me about strangers.

"There was even some public safety awareness campaign and stranger danger was a thing.

"The evidence is that – particularly talking about sexual abuse – that's much more common with people you know, by people known to the child."

Witnesses have told the inquiry of emotional, physical and sexual abuse from staff during their time at Quarriers Village in Inverclyde.

It provided residential care for youngsters in cottages up until the 1980s and would usually have just one or two adults in each home, acting as "house parents".

Mr Coggrave told how the type of care and staffing levels for such organisations has evolved since the 1980s, particularly when it came to oversight and complaints procedures.

Having admitted the village model would have made it easier for abuse to happen, he added it would have been a difficult environment for anyone to care for such high numbers of children.

He said: "As a father of two, I hasten to think what it's like to have 20 children in a house.

"If I add to that, one assumes they came from difficult circumstances. That seems an enormous challenge to me."

The inquiry before judge Lady Smith in Edinburgh continues. Press Association