

Quarriers staff 'were told at time about abuse'

Scottish Daily Mail, 17 Nov 2018 By Hilary Duncanson

MORE than a quarter of victims who say they were abused at a children's home said they told staff about the attacks while still in care, an inquiry has heard.

The Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry (SCAI) heard 164 people complained to police about suffering abuse at Quarriers Village from the 1930s onwards.

Of those, 42 told officers they had informed staff about the abuse at the time, while they were living at the Renfrewshire care home.

But only eight members of staff told police they remembered children speaking to them about abuse there, the inquiry heard.

The inquiry, sitting in Edinburgh, is investigating historic claims of abuse at children's homes and orphanages throughout Scotland.

It is currently focusing on Quarriers, which also had smaller homes in Glasgow, and Ardrossan and Largs in Ayrshire. The village near Bridge of Weir started to be 'wound down' in the 1980s, the inquiry has heard.

Detective Inspector Des McKenna was involved in preparing a report for the inquiry about investigations that have taken place over a number of years into allegations of abuse of children at Quarriers homes.

A total of 196 people complained of abuse across all the Quarriers institutions, he told the hearing.

Mr McKenna said: 'At Quarriers Village, Bridge of Weir, there's 164 complainers identified. The age of complainers at the time of the abuse was two to 17, and that was for both sexual and physical abuse.'

Discussing the report, James Peoples, QC, senior counsel to the inquiry, told the hearing the complainers were male and female, with slightly more females involved.

The inquiry heard the 'vast majority' were reporting abuse that took place in the 1960s and 1970s, with a 'substantial number' relating to the 1950s.

Mr Peoples said: 'They were complaining of a variety of forms of abuse – sexual, physical or indeed both.'

Mr McKenna told the hearing 183 individuals were accused of abuse across the various premises, although not all were able to be identified by a full name.

The majority, 159, were linked to the village, the inquiry heard. Of those, 107 were male and 52 were female, and they were made up of staff members, residents and 'external' people.

Mr McKenna added: 'There were 42 complainers who told police they had told staff about abuse while they were in care at Quarriers Village.'

'When you compare that to the total number of complainers identified for Quarriers Village, which was 164, that equates to 25.6 per cent who said they told staff they were being abused at the time.'

'Only eight members of staff recall being made aware of abuse by children, therefore the majority of staff appear to have no knowledge of physical or sexual abuse having taken place.'

The inquiry heard how, ultimately, the complaints resulted in 27 reports being submitted to prosecutors. Of the people reported, 15 ended up at trial or pleading guilty at court, High Court procurator fiscal Kenneth Donnelly later told the hearing.

Catherine White, a principal procurator fiscal depute, outlined the challenges of obtaining evidence from survivors in abuse cases.

She agreed with Mr Peoples's suggestion that many would have a basic mistrust of the authorities, adding: 'Especially in the Quarriers cases because the authorities had let them down. The system had let them down.'

She also spoke of past research suggesting that one paedophile will abuse 100 children in the course of their lifetime.

The inquiry, before Lady Smith, continues on Wednesday.