

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Anne Galloway BLACK

Support person present: No

1. My full name is Anne Galloway McKinna Black. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1942. I am 75 years old. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Career

2. My first degree was from Edinburgh University. It was an Arts degree, in Maths and French. While studying for my MA I realised that I did not want to teach, but rather pursue a career in Social Work. I went to Nottingham University to do a post-graduate diploma in social services. At that time the professional qualification for Child Care was Letter of Recognition in Childcare from the Home Office, which I gained in 1964.
3. I started working with Edinburgh Corporation as a child care officer in 1965, and held that post for about two and a half years, before I was promoted to a senior Child Care Officer post. The Social Work Scotland Act came into force in 1969 so we all became social workers rather than child care officers. I became a Social Work Area Officer in the Social Work Department of the City of Edinburgh Council. I undertook that role until 1975.
4. At regionalisation in 1975, I was appointed as a Social Work Consultant within the Social Work Department based in Edinburgh. This post was located in the Training and Development section, where I provided training on several topics but also was a consultant available to provide advice and support to workers who were with dealing complex cases. A lot of the training was related to child protection an area of work

presenting multiple issues for social workers and requiring collaboration with other professionals.

5. I moved to Midlothian as a Divisional Director of Social work in 1981. About eighteen months later, it was decided that the Mid and East Lothian Councils would be re-joined, so I was transferred Edinburgh North to work as the Divisional Director. I had additional responsibilities for the emergency duty team which provided out of hours services to the whole of Lothian.
6. I was seconded for a year in 1991 to 1992, to sit on the Orkney Abuse Inquiry as one of Lord Clyde's assessors. That role was to advise Lord Clyde about social work practice and assess the validity of actions of the professional social work staff involved in the removal of the children from Orkney.
7. I was still employed by the Social Work Department for the period of the Inquiry. I returned to Edinburgh and worked for another three years as Divisional Director in North West Edinburgh as there had been another change of boundaries in my year's absence, I was also allocated responsibility for the development and administration of the home care workforce.
8. For the last two years of my career, I was given responsibility to develop the first City of Edinburgh Children's Plan.
9. These plans had been introduced by the Children Act of 1995 to ensure all Regions created a coordinated plan with other agencies about the delivery of services to children and families.
10. After retiring I worked on a number of reviews, inquiries and investigations. One Significant Enquiry involved a review of practice in Fife in relation to abuse in two Children's Homes. I participated in child protection service reviews, and Serious Case Reviews in Aberdeenshire, East Lothian and Aberdeen City. I also led a group who were tasked with a follow up to the Caleb Ness Serious Case Review in Edinburgh making recommendations about changes to be made to ensure that children were safer. I also did a review of residential care in Dundee.

11. I became involved in several small voluntary organisations providing support for their senior managers and helping them shape their good practice

Aberlour Orphanage – job title and responsibilities

12. In 1999, or thereabouts, I was approached by the then Chief Executive of Aberlour, William Grieve asking if I would be willing to become a member of their board of governors. I was appointed in March 2000. I continued as a board member, and temporarily as Vice Chair, until March 2012.
13. I carried on with responding to enquiries from people who had previously lived in Aberlour Orphanage for a couple of years after I retired in 2012. Then it was decided that the task should go back in-house, so Aberlour staff then dealt with enquiries.
14. I initially worked with William Grieve and then with Romy Langeland for a further 5 years. I also worked with Addie Stevenson who followed Romy Langeland as Chief Executive of Aberlour
15. My role as a board member involved attending meetings, taking part in decision making about Aberlour, and matters to do with archives, service developments, finances and human resources.
16. In addition to that, I provided a professional sounding board to the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive. It was not a decision-making role, but was to offer support on a consultancy basis about service and user issues when required. I was asked to undertake that role because of my social work background. No other board member was a professional social worker at that time.
17. During my time on the Board in 2008, I was also elected as the subscribers' representative. This meant that subscribers, who were members of Aberlour, or

anyone contributing to Aberlour, could speak to me if they wanted to speak to a board member. Nobody ever did so it was not much of a role.

Soon after I joined the Board I also took on the role of responding to enquiries that were coming in from people who had lived in Aberlour or who had close family members who had been residents of the Orphanage asking for their records during their time in Aberlour Orphanage. I took on this task as an archivist, and not as a board member. The board members did not look at individual resident's records.

Children's' records from Aberlour

18. By the time I joined the Board, Aberlour Orphanage had been replaced by smaller homes in various places across Scotland. Latterly they had a major presence in Fife, Aberdeen, Glasgow, Dumfries and Galloway and Elgin.
19. In 2004 when Aberlour Head Office had to move out of its premises, all of the individual records from the orphanage had to be rehoused with the Stirling Council Archives. Around that time, many more ex residents and their families started to write in and ask for their records.
20. The Aberlour website was very clear that it welcomed people requesting more information on their time in Aberlour. Responding to enquiries for records became a much more extensive task than the earlier occasional search for records. I looked at about a thousand enquiries over the years I was undertaking the search and responding tasks. Most of them were from ex-residents themselves, but many were from the families of ex-residents who were looking to find out information on their family members who had been in Aberlour some as far back as the early 1900s.
21. Aberlour's response to enquiries about records in the past had been administrative. The letter would confirm the dates that the person was in Aberlour and provide the names of any parents. I thought that it was important to give people a lot more information about their childhood than that, so I would search out the records and give people as much information as I could.

Sources of information gathering

22. I would search in the child's file. I found that this gave a rich history of key events and had the added benefits that you could copy easily some of the key papers for the enquirer. All of the records have now been digitalised. The paper copies have been kept with a company called Data Space. This meant I accessed the digital versions with the assistance of a very competent administrative member of staff. Unfortunately, sometimes the digital copy was indistinct and writing had faded.
23. I preferred to have the paper copy when the information was extensive and poor quality and this was facilitated by the admin member of staff. Copies from the actual file also gave the enquirer greater authenticity which I felt computer printouts could not do.
24. The very early files had very little in them. Often only a single sheet of paper on Admission. As the years passed the records began to contain correspondence showing referrals, or letters for example about a child going to hospital. The later files would have information drawn together and put in the file by the senior managers at the time. I imagine it was gleaned from the people who cared for the children.
25. The later files also contained review reports, after reviews were introduced. They would be written by the person caring for the child, like the house parent in charge. It is hard to remember but I think there was usually some hand-written information and then when it was time for the review meeting, it would be typed up into a more formal document.
26. To try to glean more information for enquirers I also looked through Aberlour's monthly newsletters.
27. These were sent to subscribers who had donated money to Aberlour as well as being used to publicise the needs of the Orphanage for resources to look after the children. These newsletters were sent across the UK as well as abroad where the Orphanage had supporters. The newsletter usually listed people who had helped Aberlour with

donations of money, gifts or food, but they also recorded events that had taken place over the month.

28. The newsletters were eventually bound by year, so there were ones dating from as far back as 1875, and the latest ones I saw were in the late 1960s. I think the newsletters ceased being published around 1975.
29. I used to look through them to see if I could find any mention of the person who was looking for information. Sometimes I found a story which was specific to the enquirer for example one entry spoke of a seven- year old boy travelling up from England by train to Aberlour when the train got stuck overnight in a snowdrift. Sometimes I would send a copy of the whole newsletter for the month the person was admitted, just to bring alive what was happening in the orphanage at that time.
30. There were also a lot of letters printed in the Newsletter from ex residents, especially during World War 1. I would look through those and check if any related to the person enquiring.
31. I would respond to people with all the information I had found in relation to them. I would advise them about where else they could go to look for other records, such as their local authority records. It was often hard for people to trace those because the geographical responsibilities of local authorities had changed with several re-organisations.
32. As soon as I responded to an Inquiry, my response to their enquiry would also be copied and kept in the person's file. Although some of the enquiries were from as far back as 1890, we would still add any papers I sent, to the original file.
33. An Administrative member of staff kept a record of all the enquiries received and the dates of responses

34.

Volume of information

35. The files from 1876 to about 1920 did not contain much detailed information but there was usually a front sheet recording the child's name, address, which authority was responsible for them and who admitted them. That at least gave the enquirer basic birth information enabling the family or person to know where best to go and look for more information.
36. There was an impetus in the early 1900s to get children out of poorhouses and looked after somewhere more child friendly. There were very young children travelling from across the UK to Aberlour, miles from anywhere they had known.
37. However, the physical care in the Orphanage would be a lot better than living in a poorhouse with many vulnerable, aggressive and elderly or ill people would be staying.
38. I do not have a precise figure of the percentages of children who came to Aberlour from England and Scotland. Most children were admitted because of the Orphanage's roots in the Episcopal Church throughout Scotland and the UK. Dioceses from all over England, Scotland and occasionally Wales supported the orphanage through donations of money, clothes and toys.
39. Some of the children were admitted through the poor law administration, some came via the church, and some privately. Where the child came privately, there was a signature from whoever was asking for them to be admitted as well as a parent's signature if they had been caring for the child. It was not always easy to see what had been the trigger for the child to be admitted although the majority came because of the death or serious illness of their parent/s or homelessness.
40. It would appear that in many cases no parent remained in touch with the children.
41. As the years passed, the files got larger and there was more information recorded. The level of detail in the records dramatically improved, from about the Second World

War. There was a much fuller history of the children in the records, and more information about what their background was and then more about their life in the Orphanage and their school and other achievements.

42. From the late 1940s, probably with the Children Act 1948 coming into force, there was even more detail beginning to be recorded. From the 1950s and 60s the level of detail increased greatly.
43. With the creation of Children Departments in 1948, there was a direct link to the Orphanage with the placing authority. There were then reports and reviews that went to the authority. Around the same time more information from the people caring for the children day to day was included

Observations from Records

44. Most of the enquiries I dealt with were from Orphanage days. Latterly, we had more requests for information from the smaller post-orphanage group homes. These records were much fuller, as Residential Homes Regulations required more information about children and their issues as part of the required content of records.

Application forms

45. The early application forms had details about where the children came from, parents' names and addresses (where known), who was responsible for the child's welfare to date and who was going to pay for their care.
46. In response to a question from Counsel I found an application form dated 1898. The parent or guardian was required to sign the form and the form included the statement "I hereby promise not to remove the child without the Manager's permission or if I do to pay before removing the child the cost of the child's maintenance since the date of admission."

47. It was a form that was probably created at the beginning of the Orphanage's existence and did sound formal, but it was unlikely to have legal status. It did stop being used but I don't know when. I never saw evidence in a file of this being enforced.
48. I suppose there was a logic in it, because you did not want a parent removing a child from the Orphanage say after two weeks, and then returning them again after a very short space of time because they couldn't cope. I did not see any evidence of the statement being interpreted as preventing a parent from removing their child if they had a home for them. It was an indication that they couldn't come and gather their child up, without some sort of preparation or negotiation.
49. There were some examples of children returning home successfully after a period in Orphanage care.
50. I am sure Aberlour would be able to check the wording on admission forms used during the period of interest to the Enquiry.
A local authority would be responsible for placing the children in Aberlour's care, and if they determined that the child was to be moved, they would make the final decision.

Views of the child

51. There was not a culture of recording the views of the child in the early records. Childcare reviews, which were designed to be about the child's progress, tended to be formulaic. I think in the 1940s and 1950s, people thought Aberlour was a good, steady place for children to be and they got a good education so why would they move them? The reviews probably were seen as more of an administrative requirement rather than looking at how the child felt and what future plans should be made for their care.
52. The reviews would record if the child was going to school and other factual things, but not usually how the child felt. I doubt if any of the Aberlour children went to their own reviews until many years later possibly in the 1970s, and if they did, they would be unlikely to have been included in discussions. They would probably be wondering who all the other adults were in the room who were talking about them.

53. I didn't see many files from Aberlour in the later years, but I know from my own experience, when the Who Cares organisation started in 1975, social workers tried to make reviews more child focused and record what their issues were. Reviews of care now will be very different and go into much more in depth with the child's views central to the plans.

Contact with family

54. In the period up to 1950s, a lot of the children came to Aberlour from considerable distances. Some of the children only had one parent, and some were orphans. Some children had the most horrendous background history and they had no real prospect of going home, so the children were felt to benefit from separation from their past.

55. Many children came into the home when they were young and stayed there until it was time to leave. There wasn't a tradition of boarding out, and foster parents were not plentiful.

56. Aberlour did have an active post care plan with the Orphanage finding employment for many of the young people on local farms or in domestic service in larger estates near Aberlour. Many of the young people returned to the Orphanage for their holidays from work.

57. As time went on, Aberlour was actively rethinking its position in relation to contact. It was becoming recognised that children needed to live in smaller group settings and that contact with family was important.

58. I came across quite a few files where parents did come to see children in Aberlour.

59. I occasionally came across a letter that parents had written to children. I certainly didn't see many. I would hope that the letters would have been passed on to the children. It could be that only a few parents did write and that children child retained those letters themselves.

60. There is mention in some of the Newsletters of big post bags at Christmas times with many cards for young people and staff.

Child migrants

61. Having read Abrams book "The Orphan Country" and Shaw report, I know that numbers of child migrants varied greatly across residential care homes. .Quarrier's is recorded as having had 7000 children on schemes of migration, Whinwell had 200, and Aberlour had 50.
62. Aberlour had a strict and clear position about sending children abroad. There was very definitely no migration scheme. Children weren't forced to go.
63. Any records I found about young people who had emigrated were positive and the young people went mainly to Canada and to a specific area in known communities there, and often linked to the Episcopal Church. I understand that a family would be identified there who would act as the child's sponsor.
64. Some children went to follow up their farming interests in Canada, because a lot of Aberlour boys went to work on local farms. The records I have seen of young people going to Canada were of young people aged in their late teens.
65. I only found a record of one young person who went to Australia. His name was [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and he was a contemporary of [REDACTED] who was another Aberlour resident. [REDACTED] went out on one of the organised and assisted migration schemes. It was not forced and he went of his own accord at an age when he was capable of making that decision. He ended up in a successful legal position and became a Procurator Fiscal or equivalent in Sydney. He kept in letter contact and visited the Orphanage on any visits to Scotland until his death a few years ago.

Discipline and punishment

66. I did not have access to the Punishment books for Aberlour while I was responding to enquiries. Only if punishments were recorded in an individual child's file would I have known about it. I do not know whether punishment books survived the various reorganisation of offices Aberlour experienced.
67. In early files I do not recall staff members recording punishments in the child's file., Bedwetting was not recorded in the files I used to respond to enquiries. Sometimes if a young person ran away or got into mischief such as once where a few boys destroyed a farmer's haystack, that might be recorded in their files and sometimes anonymously in the Aberlour Magazine. I don't remember seeing any punishments recorded in the files.

Child protection

68. Child Protection was not really a commonly used term until probably 1950/60. Around 1930 it would be unlikely for any contact with the police to be made unless there was very serious abuse and charges were being pursued. Smacking a child for a misdemeanour would not be reported to the Police particularly as regulations set out what was acceptable punishment for children in care.
69. From what I saw from the records, from 1950s and 1960s onwards, if any action by a member of staff involving a child was considered abusive then it would be referred to the police. The approach to child protection became increasingly collaborative after the 1960s.
70. When I started working in the 1960s, we certainly were involving the police if there was a serious allegation and I am sure Aberlour would have been the same.
71. I can recall in some of the correspondence, phrases like "a little bit too enthusiastic about punishment" which was euphemistic language to say the punishment the member of staff meted out has been too harsh. It probably wouldn't have warranted a

police investigation, but it would warrant Aberlour thinking if they wanted this person caring for their young residents. There weren't many avenues to report such things at the time to inspectorial services. There also was no Scottish wide index of people who were not suitable for employment in care settings.

72. I recall it was around 1975 when child protection really started to get a profile. The government issued child protection guidelines and outlined how to process any incidents of abuse, including which authorities needed to be told of any risks to children. All voluntary child care organisations had to work within the procedures and collaborate with the local authority where the home was situated as well as keeping the child's home authority advised. All procedures spelled out collaborative working with the police as vital.
73. The structure within Aberlour Orphanage would have meant that the senior manager there would respond and react to any allegations, and would have to report them in line with the Government guidance.
74. During the time I was dealing with enquiries I did not find any evidence of allegations not being properly handled. That said, I only saw the records of the people who made enquiries, rather than any from people who were raising a complaint.

General feedback from ex-residents

75. The ex-residents who requested their records did not often describe their time in Aberlour in that request. Some did tell us about their experience there, but usually after we sent them information and asked them to share their experiences with us.
76. They generally would have odd memories of things that happened, but common memories were that they didn't like the size of the place, that the food was boring and not always plentiful and that going to church so often was not what they really enjoyed! There were three services a day at the time of special festivals.

77. There were things that were quite regimented about the home, but with 500 children, how could it be otherwise. When you consider financial constraints, it was also not surprising that they had to watch their money carefully.
78. Another thing that did come up in the letters was disappointment that there was not more contact with their siblings while in the orphanage. There were Residential Wings for the boys and for the girls and they only saw their siblings, I understand, at weekends. They weren't kept as a family group, but that was probably largely the nature of an orphanage and how the accommodation for so many children had to be organised.

Abuse in Aberlour – specific incidents I learned about

79. One thing that I was very clear about, and had specifically agreed with each of the Chief Executives, was that if I found anything in the records that I was concerned about which might involve abuse then I would take it to the Manager within Aberlour who had responsibility for Child Protection matters. That was important because it was not my role to investigate any potential abusive situation.
80. I can recall only three occasions out of about a thousand enquiries, where information I found during my search gave me cause for concern. There was certainly no evidence of any regular abuse.
81. One occasion was where a man asked for information from his records, but he didn't mention any issue of concern or abuse in his letter. When I carried out my search for information relating to him, I saw from his records that an incident had occurred. It was about an inappropriate relationship between a member of staff and three boys, including the man making the enquiry. I don't remember their names, but Aberlour will have a record of it.
82. The incident was clearly recorded in the file. All the correspondence relating to the child was also in his file. There was a letter in the records to the placing authority,

telling them that this child had been inappropriately treated. The letter explained the action taken which included a report to the police and the dismissal of the person. This was all done at the time of the incident, when the boy was still in care. I think the man may have gone to prison for the abuse.

83. I spoke to the Chief Executive and it was decided that we would both go to visit this man, who lived in Fife, and explain that we realised an incident had occurred.
84. When we spoke to the man, he told us that [REDACTED] had supported him and the other boys when inappropriate behaviour happened. [REDACTED] had seen that it was not right, and encouraged the boys to go to the officer in charge and say that they weren't happy. This incident would have happened at the time that [REDACTED] was in Aberlour, between the 1960s to 1970s.
85. After we met with the man in Fife, he said that he was happy that he had been heard at the time, and the incident had been properly recorded and dealt with. He did not want to do anything further about it.
86. The other two occasions related to corporal punishment. One of them was quite an old case. Corporal punishment appeared to be regularly used particularly in the school. That was however common practice over many years.
87. Whilst searching through records on those occasions and reading about what appeared to be excessive or unreasonable punishment, on both occasions, the incident was recorded, the staff member was reprimanded, and the staff member usually left. I felt reassured that the incidents that I came across were dealt with openly.
88. I don't remember what the outcome of these two inquiries were, because my role with enquiries from ex-residents had ended.
89. I worked closely with [REDACTED] helping him to piece together his early history. He had found his care in Aberlour positive and he was well regarded by staff and young

people. We did find many of his records and was able to take him to see the places in Edinburgh where he spent his first years of life.

Board meetings

90. When I was a member of the Board, it had two and sometimes three sub committees. Historically these committees dealt with staffing, the financial aspects of the orphanage buildings, farms and financial arrangements for payment of staff. They didn't deal with individual children. The only time anything relating to individual children would be mentioned at a Board in was if it was in relation to a staff member being dismissed. The minute would record the name of the staff member, the nature of the allegation and why they were being dismissed, but wouldn't name the child. By the time I was appointed to the Board, there were committees for Finance, Human Resources and Care Services.
91. There were minute books for the collation of minutes of Board meetings. The only time I would consult the minute books during my enquiries was if the Chief Executive asked me to try to find a particular record of a staff member being dismissed or leaving the Superannuation Scheme. I would literally only look through the book and pass on any information I managed to find.

Child protection and safeguarding

92. As stated earlier the Chief Executives or Directors of Children and Family Services during the time I undertook enquiries required me to alert them to any evidence of abuse, or if a staff member's name kept cropping up with some concerns noted. This procedure was in place when the webpages were revised to invite ex-residents to get in touch if they wanted to explore their records for their time in Aberlour
93. Any serious allegations could be brought to the board anonymously by the Chief Executive, and the Chair would usually be the one involved in further action, if there

was to be any. They would decide on whether any further information would be shared with the Board.

94. If there was somebody on the board with particular experience or skill relating to child protection and child development issues, then they might be asked to join in discussions. An example of this would be the child psychiatrist or social work professor who were on the board when I left. The work and the investigation would not be done by the board itself.

Closure of Aberlour orphanage

95. Over the years until early 1960s numbers of children remained high in the Orphanage. They did fall considerably from the peak of 500 as child care practice changed.
96. In 1946, the Clyde Committee advocated foster care rather than residential care for children who could not remain safely with their own parents, and large institutions were deemed an "outworn solution." A limit of thirty children per home was recommended. The boarding out of children at long distances from their family home was also not recommended.
97. From reading a number of the records, and looking at old magazines and board papers, it is clear that people started to recognise that large orphanages were not the best places to care for children. Social Care literature had started to identify the need for children to have a "family life," and these big orphanages could not give them what they needed. There was a need to revise and review the system, and move children into family groups, or group home care or extend the pool of foster carers.
98. I think the change came from within the orphanage as well as from out with. The staff started to see that it was not ideal to have so many children and young people cared for in very large houses far away from the home areas of the children. When I started working in 1965, there was recognition from those of us that had been trained, that it

was best to keep a child out of care if that could be safe, rather than place them in large institutions.

99. Where children did need to go into care, it was recognised that it was preferable to find care placements for children nearer home, and for them to have contact with parents. Aberlour was not local to most of the children so it was hard for the parents to get there.
100. Local authorities started to try not to refer children to large institutions if there was an option of placing children somewhere else. I think it was a principled decision to find care for children in smaller settings so that they could have more individual adult care and attention.
101. As this practice developed there was then no justification for having a building open which could house up to 500 children when there weren't children to fill it and the costs of maintaining large buildings had become prohibitive.
102. Some newspaper cuttings I have read at the time of the closure suggest that the topic of closure had been very extensively discussed over the years leading up to the actual closure.
103. The warden was Mr Leslie at the time Aberlour closed. He had taken over from Dean Wolfe. I realise that Dean Wolfe was always described as a charismatic person who spent a lot of his life developing and caring for the Orphanage and its residents. I think it would have been hard for him to have to manage the closure of a Home about which he was passionate.

Ex Aberlour group meetings

104. There were several get togethers of ex Aberlour boys and girls in William Grieve's time (around 1990). I can't remember what they called themselves. There are many photographs of them coming together in Stirling and having social evenings.. There would be about seventy people there who would be in their forties and fifties. I think

these meeting stopped because of some tensions about who should be invited and where to hold them.

105. There was a reunion in 2000, which was to mark the closing of the former residents' association. I don't remember what it was called. It was recognising that people were no longer so able to travel to Aberlour to come to these events. A local man called [REDACTED] who still lived at Aberlour, was keen for people to get together. A lot of people came and renewed friendships and shared memories.
106. There was a last formal meeting of Ex Residents before the 200th anniversary of Aberlour village itself., which was in 2010. I attended that dinner and met both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] there.
107. That last event was a celebration of 200 years of Aberlour Village, not just the orphanage. I met "Aunty [REDACTED] AJF" there who was an old staff member. She had been a house mother at Aberlour and a very significant figure for [REDACTED] and many other of the boys resident at that time.
108. The ex-residents also had a website which was quite active up until the later 1990s. People used it to get information about each other and any Aberlour developments. At Aberlour Head Office messages were picked up about information requests, and I would respond to them.
109. Several years ago there was also a book which sat in one of the local corner shops in Aberlour village. People who had lived in the Orphanage would go there and write down that they had visited and some recorded their wish to make contact with someone who had been in the Orphanage at the same time as them.
110. Over the years since the Orphanage closed, St Margaret's Church in Aberlour has been instrumental and very supportive to any returning boys and girls who are looking for information. They have records of births, confirmations and also the death register which includes information on children from the Orphanage as well as Aberlour Village.

.During some years in the early 1900s a lot of children from the Orphanage are recorded as having died as influenza, scarlet fever and measles were very serious illnesses then and few treatments available.

111. The only recent contacts I have had with Aberlour staff have been with those staff who work from Aberlour's headquarters or other administrative offices. I do not have any contact with Aberlour staff in direct work with children or families.

Review of care at Aberlour

112. From my contact with Aberlour over the years, I think it was like any other large institution. There were things that happened over the years that everybody would now acknowledge were bad practice. For example, separation of siblings, frequent use of the strap in school and some deprivation of basic privileges if a child misbehaved.
113. Of all the inquiries I did in Aberlour in response to letters seeking information, there were very few where I felt that the care had fallen short of what one would have hoped for. That for me is testament to how Aberlour operated.
114. In the twelve years that I was involved with Aberlour, what I gleaned from the people who wrote in and the files I looked at, was that there were staff who were very good and caring while some staff weren't so good. Overall, I think the care that was offered was of good quality. A lot of thought went into how the children were cared for and activities and opportunities for fun and development were noted.
115. I had the opportunity to speak to a lot of old Aberlour boys and girls at the 200th anniversary in 2010. A lot of them were then in their seventies and eighties. By and large people didn't like some bits about the home, and some people didn't enjoy it, but it wasn't abusive. There was no overwhelming feeling of it being awful apart from the food!.
116. People who have been in care settings during their childhood have been encouraged to talk about any abuse they experienced over the last twenty years, and people have

been aware that they could come forward. There were survivor groups even twenty years ago.

117. To the best of my knowledge not many people who lived in the Orphanage have come forward alleging abusive behaviour and I do feel there have many opportunities for them. My feeling is that if there had been systemic or systematic abuse in Aberlour there would have been more people coming forward and asking for their records or talking about abuse in the years before the current Inquiry has been working..
118. I sense from the evidence I have read during the course of the Historic Abuse Enquiry so far that much of the abuse happening in other institutions was systemic, and there appears to have been a culture of thinking that harsh discipline verging on abuse was acceptable. My reading of situations in other institutions where abuse took place was that there was usually more than one person who knew about any abuse that was going on and more than one member of staff was usually involved. Those other staff may not have been actively condoning the abuse, but the people who did know, appear not to have done anything to bring the abuse to light.
119. In all my contacts and reading I do believe that the incidents that did happen in Aberlour were isolated incidents. They were individual people over a period of time, and not a cluster of people at one time who were covering up for each other. There is nothing to suggest a culture of abuse or cover ups in Aberlour from my reading of their records over the years.
120. Whether it was because Aberlour was a Christian based organisation where the children were not seen as chattels, but were seen as individually valued and important. There was a care towards children that I felt stemmed from Christian beliefs. There were for example many letters from the ex-Aberlour boys fighting in World War1 that showed a real affection for the then Warden, Canon Jenks and for Mr White a long-standing member of staff.

Recruitment and training

121. In the 1950s and 1960s there was no access to local authority or police information in the way that we have now which might indicate that a person was unsuitable to work with children. A lot of people who came for jobs would have done so without any qualifications or relevant previous employment. References would usually be from next door neighbours or a former employer.
122. There was very little training for any residential care staff before 1960s and 1970s, so there wouldn't be any records of that. The majority of enquiries that I dealt with predated the 1970s so the staff would have been largely untrained.
123. When I was doing a consultancy job in the mid-1970s, there was a lot of stress being put on residential care training for staff across the board. This would include approved schools, secure units, residential homes in the local authority, private and voluntary sector, who all worked under the same regulations. There were some early specialist courses available in Bristol and I think, Jordanhill in Scotland.
124. When Aberlour was still running as an Orphanage some people might have had some basic training though they would have been a minority.
125. In the late 1990s there was a big drive to get residential workers trained and to get their SVQs. Now it is a requirement by SSSC that managers and other workers have achieved certain qualifications suited to their key tasks.
126. The 1968 Social Work Scotland Act introduced Inspections by local authorities of their own and other homes in their authority but run by voluntary organisations.

Culture of storing records

127. Over the years a lot of individual children's records were destroyed in line with a practice policy, which was in place until about 1971.

128. Section 17(3) of the 1959 Boarding out of Children (Scotland) Regulations, required every record that was compiled under this regulation to be preserved for at least three years after the child to whom it related had attained the age of eighteen years or, if s/he had died before that age, three years after his or her death.
129. Requirements to compile personal records are mentioned in many different regulations but I could not find any evidence of a retention period being legislated for during the period 1959 to 1996.
130. Section 12 of The Looked after Children (Scotland) Regulations 1996 says that records are to be kept until the 75th anniversary of the date of birth of the child or if the child dies before 18 for a period of 25 years beginning with the date of the child's death.
131. It would appear that retention of records for the first thirty years under consideration in the current Review were not subject to any specific regulation. From 1959 retention would be governed by the 1959 regulations, but they related only to boarded out children in foster homes and seem not to be mirrored in residential regulations. Several sets of regulations appear to have required case records to be compiled, but are silent on retention.
132. Some informal policies developed across authorities and they suggested that records should be retained up until the child's 25th birthday. If the child had died before reaching that age, then you kept their records for three years after their death. I imagine that there were places that kept files out with that time period, but I found no regulation that said they must follow that practice. .Aberlour certainly retained records for much longer than any minimum timescale that I have found.
133. I worked in Edinburgh Council at the time of the policy of retaining records till a young person attained the age of 25 and I know that boxes containing records of children would be marked for destruction once that date had been reached.

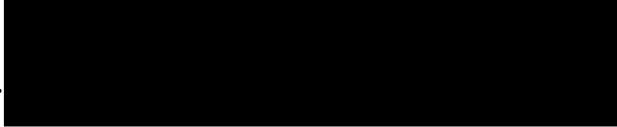
134. I think people just thought that you couldn't keep things forever, and that if someone hadn't asked for their records by their 25th birthday, then they probably wouldn't. I don't think anybody realised at that time, the extent to which people would want their records and information as they grew up and particularly when they had children of their own to help them piece together their own childhood.
135. I am fairly sure that some children were given some personal records by the local authorities when they left care. Children were sometimes so upset and angry when they left care that I think some of the young people just destroyed them.
136. Many children's homes were closed in the 70s and 80s and when that happened, records were supposed to be returned to the child's placing local authority. I can't remember what Act that was in. Aberlour had so many children, I am sure that some records would be copied and sent back to the placing authorities. I am not sure if this was done reliably by any institution, but it should have been. The local authorities may not have wanted them.
137. It was only in the 1995 regulations, that the requirements to keep records changed and agencies had to start keeping records for longer periods.
138. I think the creation and retention of records is a very difficult issue and there must be increasing issues relating to the computerisation of so many records
139. In around 2000 I undertook some work for an authority and asked them what they would give a seventeen- year old care leaver who was asking for their records. They said records were largely computerised and many systems required a new sheet to be started for each new event.
140. That could have meant there being several hundred sheets of computerised paper with a few lines on each. That felt to me a very unsatisfactory and impersonal way to let a young person learn more about their time in care. I'm not sure if this is an issue that remains for agencies.

Closing thoughts

141. Corporal punishment in families was wide spread and often severe during the years which the Review spans. It was also regular practice in children's homes and schools until clear parameters were set out in regulation until the 1980s. I think using corporal punishment for children in care, who were often very fragile and unhappy children, is something one would never want to see happening now. I think corporal punishment appeared to be used for any perceived "bad" behaviour. Punishments for emotional distress often manifested in bed-wetting were I believe totally wrong. I think people understand much more now the trauma that children experience even in the most caring of residential or foster care home.
142. It is easy to condemn the use of corporal punishment from our perspective today but people who were working in the 1930s didn't have many guidelines for providing the best standard of child care.
143. There are a lot of dilemmas in reviewing past actions with today's knowledge and approaches. We do not know what happened all the time in the institutions and how acceptable practice was. For me there is a tipping point of what constitutes reasonable chastisement, and that was talked about in the rules. I think one regulation said that if a particular child was being chastised numerous times, then that had to be reported to a medical person involved in the care of the child and the needs of the child should be fully assessed. Although there appears to have been some attempt to manage punishment then, I fear that many of the reported occasions being raised now were much more than reasonable chastisement and became abusive.

144. I am relieved that children in care now should not be subjected to any form of physical chastisement or to any emotional abuse. If staff are well trained and supported and resources are available for children and staff to explore difficult behaviour and emotional hurt then punishment should be a thing of the past.

145. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed..... 

Dated..... *9th October 2018.*