

What is the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry?

Easy Read

About this document

This is Easy Read information.

You can find other information on our website:

www.childabuseinquiry.scot

A friend, family member, or support person may be able to help you read this document.

What is the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry?



- The Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry is a public inquiry.
- Sometimes we call it 'the Inquiry' for short.
- It is an official investigation into the abuse of children in care in Scotland.

What is a child?



- A child is anyone who is under 18 years of age.
- The Inquiry is investigating the abuse of children under 18 years of age.

What does 'in care' mean?

Being a child 'in care' includes anyone who was:



- in foster care



- in a children's home



- in a hospital or long-term healthcare establishment



- in a young offenders institution



- in a residential school
- at a boarding school, or
- in any similar place.



If you are not sure if you were a child in care, you can check with us.

What do we mean by abuse?



- Abuse is when someone treated you badly, hurt you, or caused you distress.



- Abuse can be physical, sexual, or emotional. Neglect can also be abuse.



- Abuse can happen just once, or it can happen many times.



- Being abused is never your fault.

What is an abuser?



- An abuser is someone who has abused you.
- Abusers can be all sorts of people, including:



- care workers, teachers, or doctors



- people who were there to help you



- foster carers



- other children



- people you didn't know.

What is a public inquiry?



- A public inquiry may be set up if something very worrying has happened.
- A public inquiry is an official investigation into what happened.
- A public inquiry tries to work out what went wrong.



What has the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry been asked to do?



Terms of Reference

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The overall aim and purpose of this inquiry is to raise public awareness of the abuse of children in care, particularly during the period covered by the inquiry. It will provide an opportunity for public acknowledgement of the suffering of those children and a forum for validation of their experience and testimony.

The Terms of Reference set out the matters the Inquiry must consider, we cannot look at anything outwith these. The Terms set out the Inquiry's timescale and require it to make recommendations.



- Our task has been set by the Scottish Ministers. These are the people in charge of the Scottish Government.
- They have written out our task in our **'Terms of Reference'**.
- We are investigating the abuse of children in care in Scotland.
- We are finding out what happened in the past to children in care.
- We are trying to find out what went wrong.



- Then we can find ways to keep children in care safe in the future.



- At the end of the Inquiry, the person in charge will publish a report with recommendations.

Who is in charge of the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry?



- The person in charge of the Inquiry is the Chair, Lady Smith.
- Lady Smith is a retired senior Scottish judge.

The Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry is independent



- This means that we are not part of any organisation.
- This also means that we are not part of the government.

Independent



- We always act independently of any person, group, or organisation.

What powers does Lady Smith have?



- The law that applies to the Inquiry gives Lady Smith a wide range of powers.



- Lady Smith can use these powers to ensure the Inquiry does its important work as well as possible and is fair to everyone.



- Lady Smith's powers allow her to:
 - carry out investigations
 - hold public hearings



- order people, including people who were responsible for the care of children, to provide information to the Inquiry. This may include providing statements, records, and other documents.



- All the information gathered by the Inquiry is called **evidence**.

What does Lady Smith do with the evidence?



- Once she has listened to and studied all the evidence, Lady Smith writes her findings about what happened, how it happened, and who was involved.



- She may criticise people who were involved.



- She may criticise organisations who were responsible for protecting children in care.



- She may make other criticisms.

Making recommendations



- Our Terms of Reference ask Lady Smith to recommend what needs to be done to protect children in care.



- Her recommendations will be based on what the Inquiry has learned from the evidence.



- Recommendations are ideas about how to prevent what went wrong happening again.



- Lady Smith's recommendations may include changes to:

- the law
- government plans or policies
- the way that institutions, organisations, or foster care systems operate.



Why should you speak to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry?



- We want to hear from you if you were abused in care when you were a child.



- We want to hear from you if you know that children were being abused in care.



- It is important that people tell us what they know about the abuse of children in care.



- It is important that we hear from people whose voices are not always heard.



- Telling us about your experiences and what you know may help to keep children in care safe in the future.



- If you talk to us, you will be helping to deal with a serious problem in society.

Supporting you to give evidence to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

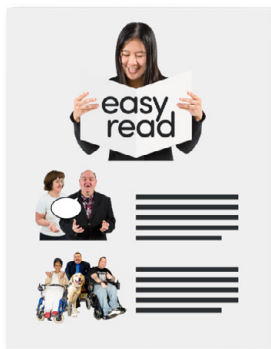


- Sharing your experience or the experiences of other children in care might be hard.



Communicate

- You may need help with communication.



- Together we can find the best way for you to provide your evidence.



- The Inquiry has a team of experienced Witness Support Officers who can help you through the process.



- We will work with you to help you feel safe when you speak to us.

