



A message from Lady Smith

Since the beginning of this year, the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry (SCAI) has made excellent progress in furtherance of our important work.

Phase 10 hearings began in December 2025 and concluded on 19 June 2026. The focus of the case study was the provision of residential care for children and young people in establishments run by local authorities and establishments run by voluntary providers used by local authorities and others to place children in care. You can read about the case study in more detail in this newsletter.

In January 2026 I published my findings in relation to the provision of residential care for children at Fettes College in Edinburgh, and they are discussed in more detail below. My findings in relation to The Edinburgh Academy and the first volume of my findings in relation to foster care are now being prepared for publication.

Reflecting on the Inquiry's progress to date, I recently noted that I have now presided over 610 days of detailed witness evidence being presented in our public hearings, over 1,500 witness statements have been published on our website, and 16 separate volumes of my case study findings have been made available to the public both in hard copy and online via our website.

In June 2026 I outlined what will be covered in the next phase – Phase 11 – of our public hearings. The overarching theme will be 'Protecting children in care in Scotland from abuse: present and future', and we plan to begin hearings in the latter part of this year.

Phase 11 will include a focus on paragraphs 6 and 7 of our **Terms of Reference**. They require me to consider the extent to which failures of state and non-state institutions to protect children in care from abuse have been addressed, and whether further changes in practice, policy, or legislation are necessary.

The structure of Phase 11 hearings will allow for some specific themes to be explored. For example, later this year we will consider why children abuse other children. Case study hearings have already included exploring much evidence about the abuse of children in care by other children in a range of different settings and I have made numerous findings about it. I now want to explore the important questions of how and why it happens.

I recently made an announcement about our work regarding the exploitation of children in care, and we plan to include it as a distinct part of our Phase 11 hearings in the early part of 2027.

By exploitation, I mean a type of abuse in which a single person or group of people persuade or force a child to engage in sexual or other harmful activity. When groups of people do this, they may be referred to as 'grooming gangs'.

So long as the child who was exploited was in care, we can investigate the abuse even if the grooming or the exploitation took place outside an institution, foster home, or other placement.

We can investigate allegations of abuse which happened before the end of December 2014 and, to be clear, we can investigate abuse which began before and continued after that date.

A video is available on our **website** where I explain more about this case study.

Whilst we have already been provided with a significant body of evidence about children in care being groomed for exploitation, I believe there may be more evidence available. If you have any information about this, please get in touch with our Witness Support Team.

Other hearings in relation to specific topics will follow, and details of these will be announced in due course.

I would like to extend my thanks again to all who have provided and continue to provide valuable evidence to the Inquiry.

Phase 11: Protecting children in care in Scotland from abuse: present and future

Phase 11 hearings, which focus on the exploitation of children in care, are planned for the early part of 2027.

Many children in care are particularly vulnerable to sexual or other exploitation.

So long as the child who was exploited was in care, we can investigate the abuse even if the grooming or the exploitation took place outside the placement or foster home.

We can investigate allegations of abuse which happened before the end of December 2014 and, to be clear, we can investigate abuse which began before and continued after that date.

We can also investigate systems which were failing to protect children from exploitation at any time, including after December 2014 and up to the present day.

What do we mean by exploitation?

Exploitation of children is a form of abuse. It can happen in person or online. A child may be exploited by a person on their own, or by a group of people. When groups of people do this, they may be referred to as 'grooming gangs'.

Exploitation can happen when a child is tricked or pressured into doing something that may cause them harm.

They may be threatened that something bad will happen if they don't do what the person or group of people want.

People who groom children for exploitation may persuade them to do what they want by

- giving them food, clothes, money, or other gifts
- providing them with drugs, cigarettes, or alcohol
- giving them a place to go
- showing them affection, being their friend, or offering to protect them.

Children may be forced or tricked into having sex, doing sexual things, or taking part in other activities that are harmful.

They may be forced or encouraged to take part in criminal activities or other things that cause harm.

It can be difficult to recognise exploitation, and children might not realise what is happening to them at the time.

SCAI would like to hear from anyone who

- was in care and wishes to share their experience of grooming or exploitation, whether it took place within or outside an institution, foster home, or other placement
- works or has worked with children in care and is aware of grooming or exploitation involving those children
- was not in care but has evidence about the exploitation of children who were in care.

The Inquiry takes a **trauma-informed approach** to how we gather evidence, and we have a Witness Support Team to support anyone who provides evidence to the Inquiry.

If you would like to talk about coming forward to provide evidence, or if you have any questions about the Inquiry, you can contact our Witness Support Team. Please get in touch – we want to hear from you.

“

It can be difficult to recognise exploitation, and children might not realise what is happening to them at the time.

- Lady Smith

”

Phase 10 case study hearings concluded

SCAI has now concluded its Phase 10 hearings which ran between December 2025 and June 2026.

This case study focused on the provision of residential care for children and young people in establishments run by local authorities and establishments run by voluntary providers used by local authorities to place children in care.

SCAI heard evidence regarding a number of establishments, including Fornethy House in Angus, owned and run by Glasgow Corporation and its successor authority, Strathclyde Regional Council; Ponton House in Edinburgh, run by the Ponton Trust; and other establishments run by local authorities in Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, Dumfries and Galloway, Fife, North Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross, and Renfrewshire.

Evidence relating to other institutions including CrossReach, The Salvation Army, and WHC Trust for Children was also examined during this phase of hearings.

A full list of the establishments which were investigated during this phase can be found on our [website](#).

Case study included:



46 days
of hearings



200
witnesses



20
institutions



evidence provided by
167 applicants

Investigations have been ongoing throughout the lifetime of the Inquiry, and many relevant statements have already been provided. However, as we head towards the next phase of our investigations, we encourage anyone with relevant information to get in touch with SCAI's Witness Support Team as soon as possible.

Fettes College

Lady Smith published her sixteenth volume of findings in January 2026, relating to the provision of residential care for children at Fettes College in Edinburgh.

She concluded that, over at least four decades, pupils were regularly subjected to appalling abuse at Fettes. The school repeatedly failed to act upon complaints, and multiple opportunities to prevent dreadful suffering were missed or ignored.

Living conditions were basic, and day-to-day responsibility for keeping order fell on senior pupils, while staff were remote, with limited, if any, oversight. In this environment abuse was able to flourish for decades.

Lady Smith said: 'Children were wholly failed by the school. They could readily have been protected, and it is shameful that did not happen.'

Findings update

Findings in relation to the provision of care for children at The Edinburgh Academy and the first volume of findings in relation to the Inquiry's case study about the provision of foster care for children in Scotland are currently being prepared for publication.

'Had complaints been listened to and acted upon at the outset, many children would have been saved from abuse. The suffering they still endure, over 50 years later, could all have been prevented.'

Written and oral evidence was provided during the case study hearings, which took place between 23 March 2021 and 17 December 2021.

The Fettes College **findings** are available on SCAI's website, together with a **video** in which Lady Smith provides a summary of her findings.



FAQs

In this section you will find some of the most frequently asked questions which relate to topics covered in this newsletter.

Q Does SCAI investigate exploitation of children in care?

A Yes. SCAI can investigate grooming and the exploitation of children in care if the child was in care at the time, even if the abuse occurred outside the placement or foster home.

Exploitation involves attempts to persuade a child into sexual activity or other harmful behaviour. Children in care can be particularly vulnerable to such abuse, and SCAI is committed to examining all relevant evidence to understand the nature and extent of this exploitation, and to consider what needs to be done to protect children in care from such exploitation.

Q Is SCAI still continuing to take evidence from witnesses after case study findings have been published?

A Yes. SCAI's investigations are ongoing. Other work including in-gathering and analysis of documents, ongoing research, drafting of case study findings, and work in preparation for the final report also continues.

All evidence provided to SCAI is important and will be taken into account to inform the final report and recommendations about what is required to protect children in the future.

We encourage anyone with relevant information to get in touch with SCAI's Witness Support Team as soon as possible.

Q Do SCAI and the Scottish Government work together on Scotland's Redress Scheme?

A No. SCAI is wholly independent of both the Scottish Government and Redress Scotland and therefore **cannot** perform any role in relation to applications for redress.

The Inquiries Act 2005 expressly prohibits the Chair from ruling on or awarding compensation. Likewise, she has no power to award redress payments under the Redress for Survivors (Historical Child Abuse in Care) (Scotland) Act 2021, no power to support or assist those applying for redress payments, no power to be involved in decision-making in relation to redress, and no power to give advice regarding redress.

Q How can I access transcripts from previous hearings?

A Transcripts are uploaded to SCAI's **website** following hearings.

Written statements provided by applicants and other witnesses are also uploaded to SCAI's website.

Statements and transcripts are redacted, where required, prior to being uploaded.

The website includes a range of features to improve accessibility, such as 'Recite Me' – an assistive toolbar that allows visitors to customise content so that they can consume it in ways that work best for them.



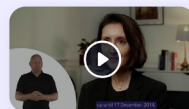
The 'Recite Me' toolbar (found at the top of each webpage) features

- a screen reader that reads website text aloud
- translation into over 100 languages, including 65 text-to-speech voices
- customisation options for neurodivergent users. Users are able to customise the website's colour scheme as well as the text, font style, size, background, colour, and spacing
- reading aids including a ruler, screen mask, magnifier, margins, and a dictionary.

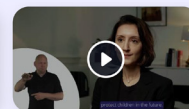
Q I'm a British Sign Language (BSL) user – how can I find out more about SCAI?

A SCAI has created a **video guide** to the Inquiry. The video series has captions along with BSL interpretation, and can be found on SCAI's **website**.

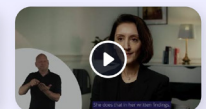
The series of short videos has been produced to help you understand how the Inquiry works. The videos cover the basics about SCAI, how to contact the Witness Support Team, how to give evidence, and what happens when you attend a public hearing.



What is a public inquiry?



Introduction to the Scottish Child Abuse



What powers does the Scottish Child Abuse

Contact

Individuals can contact SCAI's Witness Support Team:

by phone on 0800 0929 300

by email at talktous@childabuseinquiry.scot

by post at PO Box 24202
Edinburgh EH3 1JN

British Sign Language (BSL) users can contact SCAI direct through its online sign language interpreter at www.ContactScotland-bsl.org

People who are deaf or hard of hearing can contact SCAI using the **Relay UK** service – just download the app onto your smartphone, tablet, or computer.

The **SCAI website** includes a range of features to improve accessibility, such as 'Recite Me' and a series of short BSL videos.

Regular updates will be provided on SCAI's website www.childabuseinquiry.scot and via SCAI's Facebook page [@ScottishChildAbuseInquiry](https://www.facebook.com/ScottishChildAbuseInquiry)

TALK
TO US