

Quarriers children were abused, says inquiry

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Abuse Quarriers' Mizpah House in Bridge of Weir and chief executive, Alice Harper (below right), has issued a sincere apology

Children were physically, emotionally and sexually assaulted while in care over a 70 year period, the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry has found.

Interim findings published yesterday revealed young people at facilities run by Quarriers, Aberlour Child Care Trust and Barnardo's – known as QAB – between 1921 and 1991 were subjected to “harsh, rigid regimes.”

The Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry, chaired by Lady Smith, heard from more than 100 witnesses about the systems, policies and procedures at the institutions.

Lady Smith said: “Children were physically abused, emotionally abused and sexually abused in harsh, rigid regimes.

“Many children did not find the warmth, care and compassionate comfort they needed.

“Scant regard was paid to their dignity. “The previous lives of the children who came into the care of the QAB providers had all been blighted in some way, whether by being abused in the family home, the death of one or more parent, parental illness, families who could not cope with caring for them, abandonment or by other similar circumstances.

“The QAB providers could have made a real and positive difference to every child, but that did not happen.

“For many, further damage was inflicted upon them.”

The 43-day case study took place between October 2018 and February 2019, during which time the inquiry heard evidence from 110 witnesses.

At the end of last year, Quarriers apologised for the abuse suffered by thousands of child migrants it sent to live on farms in Canada, New Zealand and Australia.

The organisation sent more than 7,000 children from its headquarters in Bridge of Weir to live abroad as part of child migration schemes.

The social care provider, together with the Scottish Government, issued apologies to those involved in the scheme.

Alice Harper, chief executive of Quarriers, said: “We apologise to children migrated through Quarriers and to children who suffered abuse following migration.

“Vulnerable children were sent away and we recognise that some also suffered physical and emotional abuse, including sexual abuse.

“Today, our organisation is a social care charity far removed from its origins and for many years, we have actively worked to help migrant children and their families trace their roots and access their records.”

Lady Smith added: “The QAB providers now recognise and accept that there was widespread abuse of children in their establishments. “They have all apologised for it.

“A particularly frank and clear apology was offered on behalf of Quarriers by their current chief executive.

Counsel for Barnardo’s and for Aberlour indicated that those providers, having heard evidence in this case study, also tendered their apologies.”

Lady Smith will take these findings into account when she analyses all the evidence gathered by the inquiry and decides what recommendations to make within her final report.

Applicants and other witnesses continue to come forward to the Inquiry with relevant evidence about the care provided by QAB and this will be considered as part of the continuing process.

Founded in 1871, Quarriers aimed to provide a better life for children who were destitute or whose parents were no longer able to care for them.

It provided homes and education for children in Scotland but played a significant role in the migration of children from Scotland.