

Response Submission to the Scottish Parliament Petition's Committee re PE1351

The membership of the Cross Party Group (CPG) on Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse would like to respond to Petition PE1351 by Chris Daly and Helen Holland and to their representations on 5 October 2010 to the Committee, as recorded in the Scottish Parliament's Official Report.

Background

The CPG was convened in 2001 following a petition to the Scottish Parliament by Anne Macdonald, then Manager of Kingdom Abuse Survivors Project in Fife, on behalf of survivors of childhood sexual abuse.

This petition called for a National Strategy to highlight and address the long-term physical and psychological consequences of childhood sexual abuse.

The CPG's membership includes both survivors of child sexual abuse and health and social care professionals (psychiatrists, psychologists and representatives of survivor support agencies, leading children's charities and prevention-of-offending projects).

Comments

- 1) The CPG supports the principle that "Time to be Heard" should be rolled out across Scotland for all those abused whilst in care, by any institution.
- 2) However, we believe it is premature to comment on this in full until Tom Shaw submits his final report with its findings and recommendations to Ministers in early 2011.
- 3) We have analysed in detail the Irish experience. We believe that the facts are that the Investigation Committee cost 136 million Euros of which 60% was used to cover legal fees but also damaged survivors due to its adversarial nature. By contrast, the Confidential Committee was one which survivors felt to be beneficial, provided them with respect, an opportunity to be heard and believed, and to have their testimonies taken down as a matter of public record.
- 4) The CPG has always supported the removal of the time bar, as it is contrary to the human rights of historical abuse survivors. It is also widely recognised that survivors of childhood abuse do not disclose often until many years following the abuse due to fear and shame.
- 5) We summarise the many successes and considerable progress made for all survivors of childhood abuse since the implementation of the National Strategy for Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse, SurvivorScotland:

A website for survivors, professionals and families to access help and accurate information on CSA, data collection projects, a communications strategy, development funding for innovative new projects, research, the

development of care pathways, and the employment of two lead professionals to act as expert advisors to the government team.

- 6) In addition, the Scottish Government has funded a national service for in care survivors, In Care Survivors Service Scotland (ICSSS), who provide professional counselling and advocacy services for male and female survivors and their families. This service provided expert pre-, during and ongoing face to face and telephone support to those participants of “Time to Be Heard”, to support access and ensure re-traumatisation was addressed. Evaluations of the support offered were very positive. “You have no idea the impact you have made in my life in the little time I have known you. It is a relief to know you are there to listen & take some of the pain. There is no one else, it’s a long road but you’ll help me walk it.”
- 7) We understand that it is the democratic right for any Scottish citizen to submit a petition the Scottish Parliament. We also share with survivors many of their frustrations on how slow progress can be at Government level for change to happen. However, we are puzzled by some of the statements made by Mr Daly and Ms Holland, as we believe that there are some misrepresentations of facts, that inaccurate financial figures have been apportioned to reports and that they have not acknowledged to the Petitions Committee the progress that has been made for survivors across Scotland, as summarised above, even if they are unhappy at some of the decisions that have been made. All of this is known to both petitioners as they are members of the National Strategy Reference Group, the former ICSSS Monitoring Group, as well as the “Time to be Heard” Advisory Group.
- 8) We understand that the Government will be called to submit evidence which we cannot comment upon. However, members of our CPG who are also members of some of the Government committees on the strategy have expressed concern at Mr Daly and Ms Holland’s submissions.
- 9) As several aspects of the Petitioners’ presentation to the Petitions Committee are demonstrably inaccurate, we are concerned as a group that this misinformation may have the potential to damage the reputation of the National Strategy and its many successes at a time when we require the continued commitment of our Parliament and Government to ensure this agenda remains a priority.

We are happy to provide oral responses to the Committee if necessary.

Convenor, Marilyn Livingstone MSP
Vice Convenors, Margaret Mitchell MSP and Anne Macdonald
Secretary, Janine Rennie, Open Secret Treasurer Marnie Collin, KASP
On behalf of the members of the Cross Party Group on Survivors of Childhood
Sexual Abuse