

CHILDREN'S CHARITIES IN ABUSE PROBE

Police investigate three major care organisations

- [Scottish Daily Mail](#) 18 Dec 2018 By Graham Grant Home Affairs Editor

THREE of Britain's biggest childcare charities are at the centre of police investigations into allegations of child abuse.

Detectives are probing claims that children were abused while in the care of Barnardo's, Quarriers and the Aberlour Child Care Trust. Barnardo's, the UK's largest childcare charity, has faced a series of allegations that children in its homes were beaten and raped. Police Scotland last night revealed that it was investigating claims of historic abuse relating to the three organisations.

The charities have come under scrutiny at the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry (SCAI), which has heard a catalogue of claims from survivors formerly in their care.

Seventeen people, including nuns, were either arrested or reported to prosecutors as part of a separate investigation into the Daughters of St Vincent de Paul, the Catholic order which ran the now-defunct Smyllum Park orphanage in Lanark.

A source close to the latest police inquiry involving Barnardo's, Quarriers and the Aberlour Child Care Trust said 'there are live, ongoing investigations into persons associated' with the charities.

It is understood that those under investigation are either ex-employees or former helpers and volunteers.

Detective Chief Inspector Laura Carnochan, of the National Child Abuse Investigation Unit at Police Scotland, said:

‘Investigating child abuse offences is highly complex and every care is taken to ensure that inquiries are proportionate, appropriate and that victims’ needs are central to our investigations.’

The ongoing SCAI, which is investigating allegations of institutional child abuse in living memory, heard an allegation last month that a boy of 12 was raped by a Barnardo’s home carer.

Killian Steele, 54, claimed the charity had issued ‘reprimands’ to the man after suspicions were raised – but let him stay on.

He said: ‘Barnardo’s chose to protect him over me. This national organisation whose main purpose was to safeguard... disadvantaged children actually ignored allegations of sexual abuse.’

James Peoples, QC, senior counsel to the inquiry, said the SCAI had found the prosecution did not go ahead because of a lack of corroboration.

The SCAI has also heard a litany of appalling physical and sexual abuse claims said to have taken place at Quarriers Village in Bridge of Weir, Renfrewshire, including allegations of a paedophile ring.

Allegations relating to Aberlour Child Care Trust include claims of sexual abuse.

The inquiry heard in October that more than 360 people have made complaints of physical and sexual abuse at orphanages run by Quarriers, Barnardo’s and Aberlour Child Care Trust. Police Scotland has so far examined 270,000 historical files in connection with the SCAI.

Stuart Gale, QC, representing ‘Former Boys And Girls Abused ‘in Quarriers Homes, has told the SCAI that until the 1980s, ‘a regime of violence and beatings existed without proper restraint’.

A regime of violence’

He said many victims had not complained at the time due to 'fear of repercussion'. opening statements earlier this year, the charities apologised to those who had suffered abuse.

Kate Dowdalls, QC, read a statement on behalf of Quarriers, saying she was 'instructed first to reiterate the unreserved apology that was offered to survivors of abuse on May 31, 2017, at the outset of the hearings during phase one of this inquiry'.

She added: 'Quarriers acknowledges children were subjected to physical, sexual and emotional abuse whilst in their care.'

Steven Love, QC, for Aberlour, offered an 'unreserved apology' to survivors and said it welcomed the opportunity to 'investigate the flaws' in its historical practices.

Gordon Jackson, QC, representing Barnardo's, said the organisation was 'committed to learning from the past' and had adopted an 'open and supportive stance' towards the inquiry.

Previously, the SCAI has looked at establishments run by the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, and former children's homes run by the Sisters of Nazareth – which is also the subject of a separate police investigation.

The SCAI's first interim report, published in October, found children were abused, beaten and humiliated at Smyllum Park and Bellevue House in Rutherglen, Lanarkshire.

SCAI chairman Lady Smith concluded: 'The abuse which took place was physical, emotional and sexual.'