

Sex abuse probe 'too costly' said ministers

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A PROBE into widespread child abuse in Scotland was delayed because 'the money wasn't there' during the financial crisis of 2008, an inquiry was told.

The Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry heard how senior politicians viewed a large-scale investigation into the abuse of children as something that would 'tie up people for a considerable amount of time'.

The latest phase of the inquiry, set up in October 2015 and chaired by judge Lady Smith, is exploring why ministers resisted calls for such a hearing between August 2002 and December 2014.

Jean MacLellan, a former divisional head and deputy director of the Adult Care and Support Division at the Scottish Government, told the inquiry in Edinburgh: 'It was 2008 when there was a financial collapse. The money wasn't there.

In any discussions with ministers, we were asked about costs. I think the concern would be to try to move on with something that was practical and feasible.'

Miss MacLellan had been appointed as chairman of the National Reference Group for child abuse, an advisory body for the Government.

It proposed a Confidential Forum for survivors, which was described as being not as thorough but less costly than an investigative committee.

Michael Russell, who was environment minister, also gave evidence to the inquiry yesterday. He said: 'An inquiry would take a long time, it would tie up people.'